DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 416 014 PS 026 224

AUTHOR	Sheffer, Susannah, Ed.
TITLE	Growing without Schooling, 1997.
ISSN	ISSN-0475-5305
PUB DATE	1997-00-00
NOTE	225p.; For the 1996 issues, see PS 024 725.
AVAILABLE FROM	Holt Associates, Inc., 2269 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02140; phone: 817-540-6423 (single copy, $6; 1-year subscription, $25).
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - Serials (022)
JOURNAL CIT	Growing Without Schooling; n114-119 Jan-Dec 1997
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	Activism; Attention Deficit Disorders; Autism; College Admission; Discipline; Elementary Secondary Education; Family Characteristics; *Home Schooling; Instructional Materials; *Learning Activities; Newsletters; Nontraditional Education; Organizations (Groups); Parent Student Relationship; *Parents as Teachers; Reading Instruction; Resource Materials; Student Attitudes; Student Evaluation; Teaching Methods
IDENTIFIERS	Home Curriculum; Parents as Learners

ABSTRACT

These six bimonthly issues focus on home schooling, providing parents in the United States and other nations with ideas, activities, research, and resources to teach their children at home. Each issue contains short news items and reports on home schooling, letters from parents, letter on the challenges and concerns of home schooling, a focus topic, book and resource reviews, and a resource and information list. Feature reports and letters from parents include the following: (1) "Valuing Children's Questions" (Jan-Feb); (2) "A New Look at Attention Deficit Disorder" (Jan-Feb); (3) "Late Readers Turn Out OK" (Mar-Apr); (4) "Second-Generation Homeschoolers" (Mar-Apr); (5) "Self-Evaluation" (May-Jun); (6) "Rethinking Discipline" (May-Jun); (7) "Homeschooling Children with Autism" (May-Jun); (8) "In Defense of Doing Nothing" (Jul-Aug); (9) "Young People as Local Activists" (Jul-Aug); (10) "Grown Homeschoolers Reflect on their School-Free Lives" (Sep-Oct); and (11) "Hard Times at Home: Is Homeschooling Still Possible?" (Nov-Dec). (KB)

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SPECIAL ISSUE

INCLUDES: The Complete Directory of Homeschooling Families and Groups

GROWING WITHOUT SCHOOLING

$6 Issue 114 Jan/Feb '97

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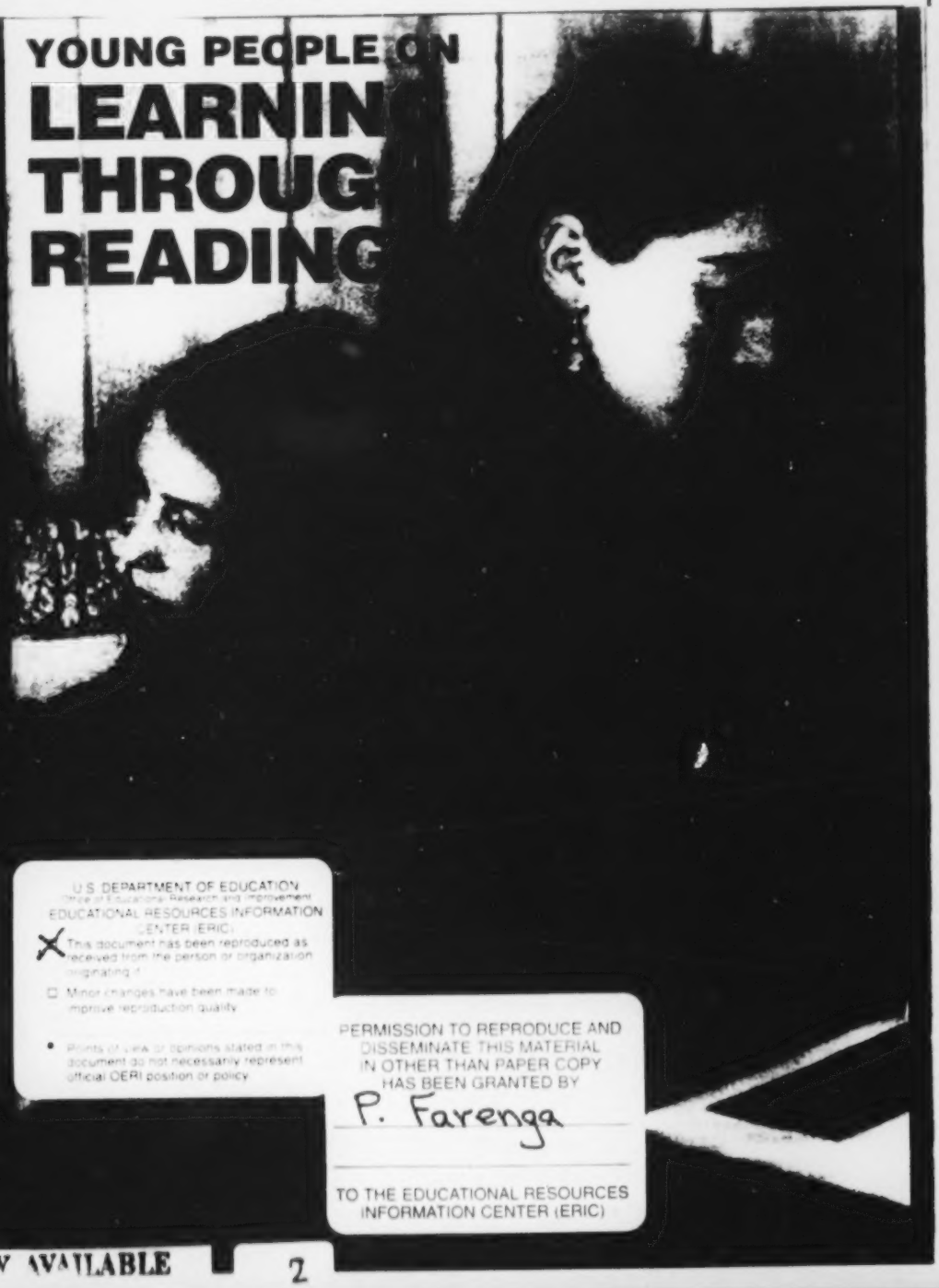
Teachers Open Homeschool Center

Valuing Children's Questions



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Issue #114
Jan./Feb. '97

GWS

Founded in 1977
By John Holt

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GWS Illustrations by Emily Linn
Cover photo is of Emily (right) and Eva Shell. See Focus, p. 16.

Growing Without Schooling #114, Vol. 19, No. 5. ISSN #0475-5305. Published by Holt Associates, 2269 Mass. Ave., Cambridge MA 02140. $25/yr. Date of issue: Dec. 1, 1996. Periodicals postage paid at Boston, MA and at additional mailing offices.
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to GWS, 2269 Mass. Ave., Cambridge, MA 02140.
ADVERTISERS: Space reservation deadlines are the 1st of odd-numbered months. Copy deadl' are the 15th. Write for rates.

In this issue

How do homeschoolers get exposure to a broad range of ideas? How do they hear about opinions or views other than their parents'?

When I answer this question (and it's interesting how many people ask it), I talk about all the people homeschoolers are likely to know and be involved with and all the work and activities that are available. I also mention reading. I say that even just through reading, young people can come across ideas that they hadn't otherwise known about. They can be challenged, provoked, inspired, or unsettled, and all through their own encounters with written material. For this issue's Focus, we asked several homeschoolers to write about how something they read opened their eyes to a new idea or new way of thinking. We asked in particular to hear about books that they had discovered on their own, or that people outside the family recommended to them, just to further confirm the notion that homeschoolers aren't limited to what their parents put before them.

We may realize in a rather general sense that reading can broaden horizons or open eyes, but it's fascinating to hear about the details of that process. It is, at first, a deliciously *interior* sort of experience: Arwen reads about a teenage drug addict and feels, in her own mind, the stirrings of understanding about what leads to such behavior. Peter picks up a book that challenges his ideas about success, and he engages in an inner dialogue with the author, as he at first doubts but then comes to embrace the book's arguments. Later, they may talk to friends and family about what they've read and discovered; they may even turn their thoughts into action, as Peter did when he began publishing his own 'zine and as Lorin did when he embarked on a cycling trip. But that initial discovery – that moment of feeling a new idea work its way into one's understanding – happens privately, and it's not an event anyone else can plan or control.

This issue of GWS, Jan./Feb. 1997, heads off our 20th anniversary year, and it's fitting that so much of the material should be about where young people's own curiosity and efforts lead them. Not long after launching GWS, John Holt wrote in his introduction to Alison Stallibrass's book *The Self-Respecting Child*, "Most books written about how to rear or teach children ... talk as if children must be and can only be what adults *make* them. They rarely if ever talk about what children can make of themselves, about the powers that from the day or moment of birth are present in every child." "This book does," John went on to write, and, likewise, this magazine does. Twenty years later, the message underlying just about all of our material is still, "Children are good at learning." Thus, in this issue we have a feature on young children's questions and where those questions lead. And the Focus on learning through reading gives a glimpse of how older children and teenagers continue to make sense of their world, showing that curiosity does *not* have to lessen with age.

– Susannah Sheffer

News & Reports

Teachers Open Homeschool Center

Joshua Hornick and Ken Danford write:

The two of us, former public school teachers, opened Pathfinder Learning Center over the summer. Pathfinder supports teenage homeschoolers and their families. We work mostly with teenage homeschoolers because it's so easy. With a modicum of direction and support from parents and from PLC, they can carry out fabulous self-directed learning. We make self-directed learning an easy alternative to school for families in our area.

Why did two teachers decide to open a center for homeschoolers? In Joshua's case, "I had been interested in homeschooling for years, and I wrote my master's thesis on how homeschooled kids learn science. But I was still working in schools and was more or less content, until I began to get fed up being someplace where most of the kids didn't want to be, most of the time. I've taught in four different schools, and this was true everywhere, even in the best of schools at the best of times. It made me nuts, and I wanted something different."

In Ken's case, "I was an activist teacher. I taught Social Studies at the junior high school and believed that you have to make historical studies relevant to the present and to connect it to community action. The Social Studies department wouldn't allow this. For example, when students wrote letters to the superintendent and to the local newspaper advocating that we no longer celebrate Columbus Day, I was told that the letters couldn't go out."

Ken now runs a social issues discussion group at Pathfinder every Monday morning. Just yesterday, a dozen kids gathered to hear two recovering drug addicts tell their stories, and it was a very harsh but very moving and valuable experience. Other discussions have led to action. For example, the first morning it met, only one student came, and the particular issue that concerned her was how local trails are misused by off-road vehicles. After discussing this for a while, Ken and the young woman drove to a nature center, which referred them to the person in charge of trail maintenance for this town. Since then, a crew of between three and seven people from Pathfinder have gone out each week to spend a day working on repairing trails, making signs, building bridges.

Pathfinder has 30 families with us now, and we still get two or three serious new inquiries every week. The majority of our families just left school this year, and several of them tell us that they would not have become homeschoolers if our support was not available. It means a lot to parents who feel that they are taking a big chance by homeschooling that the two of us are former teachers, although we don't feel our classroom experience is what helps us do this work now. Our being teachers did help us reach students in school, however, because at the end of last school year, students knew that two well-liked teachers were leaving, and they were interested to know why. Two days after school ended in June, we held a public meeting at a local community center to present our plans for Pathfinder. We had expected about 20 people to show up, but 80 showed up, which reinforced for us how important the alternative we were offering was to the people of this community. We were also featured in a newspaper article, which brought us some interest, but what's exciting now is that it's mostly word of mouth from one teenager to another that brings new members to us.

With 30 families, we feel we have attained a critical mass. There is a sense of community. Some kids stop in once a week; others come three or four times a week. Sometimes they just stop by. Sometimes they spend the day. Nothing is required, except to treat others respectfully while here. Our center is three rooms in an office building in the center of Amherst (convenient to public transit). The teenagers come here to hang out, study, or attend classes offered by staff, kids, parents, or friends. We also help families prepare their curricular plans (required by Massachusetts law) and conduct college or job searches. In addition to offering classes and groups, we coordinate field trips and help find or set up internships and mentor arrangements.

Pathfinder charges a membership fee of $1000 per year. Most families pay quarterly. We make arrangements with families who can't pay that much.

Studying basic electricity at the Pathfinder Learning Center

It usually seems like a lot of money to experienced homeschoolers. It usually seems extremely reasonable to people just leaving the school system. We'll need 60 or 70 members before the two of us are making a living wage. We're not drawing much salary yet. We have organized as a charitable not-for-profit corporation, enabling us to accept tax-free contributions (if anyone is moved to send us a contribution, we will appreciate it). We think that we'll be able to pull in $5000 or $10,000 a year from contributions and fundraisers. We hope to begin applying for grants as we develop a track record.

Teenaged kids are remarkable autodidacts, but they do benefit from having a safe place away from home where they can hang out with other unschoolers. They do benefit from having non-parental adults to help guide them. Parents and kids benefit from our expertise in self-directed learning, from our background in a fairly wide range of subjects, and from the resources of the community. We believe that the continuity of a professional staff – that is, people whose job it is to run the center every day – is very important. We are able to be responsible and responsive. What needs to get done always gets done.

If anyone wants to know more about Pathfinder, we can be reached at Pathfinder Learning Center, PO Box 804, Amherst MA 01004-0804; 413-253-9412; email jhornick@k12.oit.umass.edu.

Meeting with College Admissions Counselors

Nancy Plent of the New Jersey Unschoolers Network writes:

This past May, several homeschooling parents and teenagers in our area were invited to be on a panel at the annual conference of the New Jersey Association of College Admissions Counselors. It came about because a local mother who is homeschooling her nieces was meeting with the registrar at a community college, where her nieces had been accepted. It happened that the registrar at that college was in charge of setting up workshops for the conference of admissions counselors, and so he asked this mother if she wanted to give a workshop on homeschooling. She didn't want to give a workshop by herself, so he suggested holding a panel.

The families met with this man ahead of time to prepare for the panel. He explained to us that many of the admissions counselors wouldn't be aware of some of the special issues that can come up for homeschoolers in college admissions – for example, they wouldn't necessarily know that many homeschoolers aren't affiliated with a school and don't have the usual transcript of courses. He felt that the counselors should learn from us so that they would be prepared to understand homeschoolers' applications.

On the panel, we each introduced ourselves briefly and told about our homeschooling situation. The teenagers did most of the talking, explaining what they did and how they studied. As is typical with homeschooling teenagers, they were all involved in varied activities, including activities that wouldn't normally be considered strictly academic.

The college counselors asked many of the usual questions about homeschooling. They hadn't heard of the Colfax family before, and were impressed to learn that there had been homeschoolers at Harvard. They also learned that some colleges in New Jersey have been admitting homeschooled students way before the age of 18. They acknowledged that several colleges have programs with the public schools that allow younger students to be admitted, but it had never occurred to those attending the panel that this could work with homeschoolers as well. When they learned that other colleges were already doing this, they felt that they could do it, too.

The counselors were all quite cordial to the panel. I think that many of them had simply not been aware that there even *were* homeschoolers in New Jersey going to college. Their attitude was one of curiosity and friendliness. I have the business cards of a couple of counselors who would like to talk further about what they can do to help homeschoolers with any admissions questions or problems. All in all, it was a very encouraging event!

Homeschooling in Israel

Sara-Rivka Ernstoff writes from Israel:

I moved to Israel in September. On top of jet lag and culture shock, I have been threatened with jail and deportation for the heinous crime of homeschooling my children. I have been reported to the authorities even though I voluntarily informed the ministry of education of my intent to homeschool.

It's strange for me to have changed from a confident supporter of others to a person very much in need of support. There are several families homeschooling in Israel, but only one has official permission. The others homeschool illegally and as of yet no one has been jailed, to the best of my knowledge.

This situation is very unnerving for me, but so far I'm doing OK. I have been polite, explained homeschooling to the authorities, and remained steadfast in insisting that, while I would like to be a law-abiding citizen, I answer to a higher authority.

I am attempting to tape record my meetings with officials, mostly to show that I am not intimidated. One official went so far as to say that she was impressed by my sincerity. This woman "just happened" to make an unannounced home visit during one of those rare, quiet moments when we were sitting on the couch reading from the Bible.

I would appreciate any letters of support. And the next time you're complaining about having to write that quarterly report for the superintendent, count your lucky stars!

Office News

[SS:] If you're a long-time GWS subscriber, you probably exclaimed, "Wow, that looks different!" when you saw this issue's cover. Since our distribution on newsstands (in bookstores, health food stores, and so on) increases with each issue, we want to be eye-catching to browsers who are meeting GWS for the first time, and we're excited to have found designers who have helped us create a two-color cover at not much extra cost. We hope all of you enjoy the new look as well.

and will let us know what you think of it.

Each year our Directory of Families and Organizations gets bigger and bigger! You'll notice some changes in the way this year's Directory is arranged, so be sure to read the introduction on p. 26 before trying to look someone up. Our next issue, #115, will have our annual lists of helpful teachers, lawyers, professors, psychologists, school districts, grown-up homeschoolers, and resource people (which includes people who have experience with adoption, autism, blindness, computers, custody disputes, down syndrome, ham radio, learning disabilities, mental illness, Montessori, physical handicaps, single parents, traveling families, and twins). Let us know if you know anyone who should be added to these lists, and also let us know what your experience has been using any of the lists.

On this issue's back cover, you'll see an announcement of our GWS 20th anniversary conference, planned for August of 1997. We're anticipating a great event, and will keep you posted with details. We hope many of you from outside Massachusetts will be able to attend – consider combining the conference with a family vacation.

We'll also be planning a 20th anniversary issue (#118), full of some material similar to what was in our 10th anniversary issue (reflections from long-time homeschoolers, for example), and full of lots of other great material too. If you know of any long-time homeschoolers who may not still be getting GWS, and thus whose names and addresses we might not have, do send us the information. And do make sure that your own subscription is current through #118 so that you don't miss that special issue.

As we go to press, plans are just being finalized for Holt Associates to take over as publishers of some of the great titles that Home Education Press has been offering for years: *I Learn Better by Teaching Myself* and *Still Teaching Ourselves*,by Agnes Leistico, *Good Stuff*, by Rebecca Rupp, and other titles, including a forthcoming book by Cafi Cohen called *And What About College?*

As we intensify our focus on the publishing aspect of our work, we expect to be cutting back somewhat on the *retail* side of things, so we will be cutting from our catalog several wonderful books that we love but just can't offer profitably. See the list on p. 25 for a last chance to order some of these books.

A note to subscribers outside the U.S.: we have recently discovered that current postal costs exceed what we have been charging our customers for surface mail subscriptions, so we need to raise those rates slightly. From now on, the cost of a **surface-rate** subscription (which includes subscriptons mailed to Canada) will be $29 for one year, $53 for two years, $72 for three years. **Air mail rates** will remain the same: $40 for one year, $60 for two years, $75 for three years. Please note these rates if you're due to renew your subscription soon (and bear in mind that an issue mailed via surface can take up to three months to reach customers overseas). ◆

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Valuing Children's Questions

Here's an easy way to tell the difference between a teacher-directed and a learner-directed situation: listen to who's asking the questions.

Take a simple question like, "What's the capital of North Dakota?" If a teacher calls on Johnny and asks him that question, she's interested in finding out *if Johnny knows* the capital. It's a "quiz question," as John Holt put it.

But if Johnny is riding in the car and asks his mother that question, he's asking because – for some reason of his own – he truly wants to know. When children do the asking, their own curiosity is the driving force behind the question, and that's a force strong enough to propel them into a wide range of areas, subjects, disciplines. If you're feeling doubtful about whether enough material will be "covered" if the learner is in charge, let these stories about children's questions celebrate their delightful and powerful urge to make sense of the world.

She's in Charge

From Barbara Walker (WV):

Tegan (5) and I went to look for a house for sale (every six months I look at a house in town to remind myself what a gift our house out in the country is). As we were driving away, waving to the realtor, Tegan asked, "Is *that* her *job*?"

I answered, "Yes. She helps people sell houses and she helps people find houses to buy."

"Does she help people move?"

"No, there are other people who help people move."

"Does she help people pack their things?"

"No. Roseanne just helps people sell houses and buy houses. She tells people how to fix up their house so it will look nicer, she meets people who want to look at the house to see if they want to buy it, she helps with all the paperwork, she calculates how much money people will need to buy the house, how much interest will be on the loan, and a bunch of other numbers you have to figure out when you buy or sell a house."

"She's a math whiz!" replied the impressed Tegan, "and I'm a math whiz, too!"

Other examples of Tegan's questions: since my grandmother died, and since we had two pets die soon after that, Tegan has asked many questions about death. About a month after my grandmother's funeral, we were riding in the car (where most of the best questions happen) and Tegan asked, "When you die, will I be grown up?"

I opted to give the simpler, less scary answer: yes. I explained that most people are very old like Nana was when they die. Tegan's older brother Ben (12) had to offer correct information, of course, and told her that some people die in accidents or of sickness even when they're young and that Mommy could die sooner. This caused Jordan (2) to wail, "NO, Mommy die." More crying. I explained to Ben that when you're talking to young children, it is good to adjust your answer for their level of understanding. It really was enough, for Tegan, to say what happens to most people and certainly Jordan doesn't have the grasp of the concept of time she would need to understand Ben when he kept reassuring her, "Mommy will die, but not soon."

Recently I wrote down the questions Tegan asked at midnight after we came home from a meeting where it was announced that someone wouldn't be attending because she had a cut on her arm and had to have six stitches. Tegan asked:

"Do stitches hurt?"

"Do they make you go to sleep when they give you stitches?"

"If the cut is from here to here, do they sew all the way around?"

"What is muscle?"

"So if you break a bone, do they stitch the bone?"

"What is this (pointing to the tendons in my wrist)?"

"And they have a special needle for sewing stitches, right?"

"What if a baby steps on a nail?"

"So, say it is a walking baby, you wouldn't let the baby walk?"

Another day, we got up very early to travel to a conference. It was dark and I was telling Tegan we would get to see the sunrise. She was wide awake and asking questions. After I answered three or four seemingly unrelated questions, she asked, "Where is the ocean?"

I pointed to the left and said, "If you drive that way for a long time, longer than it takes to drive to Granny's house, you would get to the ocean."

"Oh," she replied, "then if I look that way I will see the sun come up?"

I was amazed, because instead of asking a question to get information directly ("Which way should I look to see the sun come up?"), she used something she already knew (something I didn't know she knew), added an answer to a question she formulated, and came up with a bit of knowledge that was useful to *her*. She is the one in charge of her world.

Brothers Ask Different Questions

From Phoebe Wells (MA):

Eoin was an incessant questioner as a young child. When asked why we were planning to homeschool then,

Tadek (his father) and I often joked that it was to save some poor kindergarten teacher from a nervous breakdown. By the time Eoin was 4, we even had a 9:00 PM curfew on questions, just for our own sakes.

His questions then and now (at age 9) are primarily analytical ones as he tries to make sense of other people's motives, strategies, and, often, why the strategies didn't work. We have read books about history together over the years, and Eoin's own questions in response to what we've read have led him to study certain periods and events on a far deeper level than is ever covered in elementary school. He has wondered how the geographically tiny country of England could amass a huge British empire, why Napoleon waited so long to begin his retreat from Russia, why Harold was unable to fend off William the Conquerer at the Battle of Hastings, why Paul Revere and not Samuel Prescott is usually credited with warning the Minutemen, and countless other particulars of Gettysburg, D-Day, Hiroshima, and more.

Eoin's younger brother Daire, at 4, now asks many questions too, but of a different nature. Daire, whose way of speaking is often elliptical at best, frequently asks the same question repeatedly, usually about something we've just read aloud. We used to find it very frustrating to be asked over and over why Pippi Longstocking threw the bully in the air when we knew Daire knew the answer because we had already discussed it many times. Then a librarian suggested that this might be Daire's way of talking about his favorite books, and she was right. Now, instead of feeling annoyed when he asks, again, why the cat's name is Professor Guesser, we respond by asking him if he likes rhyming names or what he thinks of something else in the story. He's delighted that we've cracked his code, and we all enjoy the conversations his questions initiate. I don't even want to think about how a classroom teacher would have dealt with Daire's repetitive questions.

Though my kids love to ask questions all day long, they despise being questioned themselves. Daire just refuses to answer and won't even acknowledge your presence if he doesn't like your question. Eoin will answer questions until he smells a quiz or an interrogation. Then he'll either clam up tight or turn the questions back to the person asking. It's pretty obvious that questioning our kids can cause an abrupt end to a conversation but their own questions lead them into all kinds of learning adventures. For them, being in charge of the questioning is a matter of autonomy.

Asking About Human Behavior

From Cherylee Duncan (MO):

My children ask a lot of questions about feelings and human behavior. Those questions don't usually have an answer that you can go look up, but what they seem to want to know is what I think, so we talk about what I think and what they think and what they've noticed. My 11-year-old daughter, for example, asked me, "Why do so many boys like to kill bugs and other creatures?" We were talking about a family we know that has six boys, and my daughter has noticed that they like to do things like shooting pigeons and killing bugs, which we don't do because we've taught our kids to be respectful of animals. It seemed to her that she has noticed more boys than girls being into that kind of thing, so she was trying to understand that.

Another time, she asked, "How come some people don't seem to have very much common sense?" because she heard us talking about our neighbors who often do things that don't seem to show much sense! Her question led to a discussion about why some people do things that seem illogical to us. I didn't have a clear answer for her, but I talked about how I think common sense is a combination of what you're born with and what you learn from your experience and from your parents' example. That seemed to satisfy her.

Sometimes, even when it *is* possible to find a precise answer to a question, it's fun to guess about it first. When we were driving to St. Louis, my 13-year-old son saw the famous Gateway Arch in the distance, and he asked, "How did they build it?" We didn't know the answer, but he and my husband began hypothesizing about how it might have been done. When we later went to visit the arch and saw a film about how it had been built, it turned out that their guess had been right. I think it was more fun for them to try to figure it out first than simply to say, "I don't know; we'll find out when we get there."

From Reading and Observing

From Leslie McColgin (KY):

Candra (12) often asks questions that seem to come out of the clear blue, because she's been thinking something over for a while, often something she has read. When she asks me a question, I often have to say, "Tell me the context" or "What made you think of that?" before I can answer. Some questions like this that I can remember are "What is credit?" and then, when I asked her what she meant, "What does it mean when they say you have bad credit?" Another one was, "What did people who were shortsighted in medieval days do without glasses?" Medieval things interest her and that question probably came from something she had read. The discussion that followed prompted Calen (9) to ask his own question, "When was glass invented?"

Candra's questions also come from things she's observing. Riding in the car at night and looking at the stars, she asked, "What do the stars and the sky look like when you're in outer space?" and then, after we talked a while, "Do you think planets in other solar systems are different? Could more than one planet in a solar system support life? Could life be different?"

Another time, Calen asked, "How do animals think?", because we were talking about our animals, and "What are leaves made out of?" when we were collecting leaves. In general, Calen doesn't ask as many questions as Candra. He, instead, often makes statements of "fact" about things he has observed and concluded. Sometimes I have to provide some feedback to help him revise erroneous conclusions he has arrived at, so these exchanges serve the same function as curiosity questions would. ◆

Challenges & Concerns

Mothers Need Time

Chris Sims (VT) writes in response to the letters in GWS #112 about mothers taking time for themselves:

I too need time alone to just recharge and think, and I also need time to write. So, when my children were 4 and 6, I established a routine of writing from 5:00 to 9:00 AM. The kids got up around 8:00, at which time I'd set up their breakfast within sight of the computer and finish the day's writing. I set a timer so they'd know when I'd be all theirs. I asked them to be quiet and to work on projects of their own; they could count on me to hit the "save" button and shut down precisely at 9:00.

But it didn't always go that smoothly. I recall a day I was only a paragraph away from completing a chapter as the clock ticked close to my quitting time. I put my brain in high gear and searched for just the right phrasing as fast as I could when my 6-year-old's voice sang out with, "It's 8:52, Mom! Almost time to turn it off!"

"Yes, dear I know," I answered, trying to retain a hold on the shadowy idea that had not yet been translated from imagination to sentence. A minute later, I almost had it. My fingers hovered over the keyboard, ready to start. Hoping my subconscious would fill in the missing phrases by the time I got to them, I began to type.

"Mom! Mom! Uh-oh!"

Uh-oh. Like the ringing of the phone or a child's cry at night, those two syllables never fail to capture my attention. I turned to my daughter, my sentence gone like a genie's smoke.

"What's the matter?"

"It's 8:54."

My fingers contracted into claws. Trying to keep my voice calm, I asked my daughter to be patient and assured her the kitchen timer would ding when it was time.

At 8:55, my son dropped a glass and broke it. A minute later, I was back at the computer, rereading my last three paragraphs to reconstruct my thinking for the two sentences I had yet to create.

A piping voice intruded. "It's 8:56! Wow! In four more minutes, Mommy will be mine! All mine!" (I made a mental note to add "clock math" to the day's school record.)

At 8:58, with half a sentence to go, the kids got into a fight. Having no hope of concentrating with that kind of noise, I got up and separated them. Back at the computer, I had to hit the page-up key a couple of times to get back into the right mood, the right frame of reference, and the right character's head. The kitchen timer dinged. I kept going. Only half a sentence, for goodness sake!

"Mom, the timer dinged."

"I know. There've been so many interruptions in the last ten minutes that I couldn't finish. Just a few more words and I'll quit."

Step one: calm rising blood pressure. Step two: where was I? Step three: all right now. A meaty rejoinder – one that gives closure to the chapter but won't allow the reader to reach for a bookmark.

"Mom?"

"Quiet!" I hunched closer to the keyboard and pecked a few keys.

"It's 9:03, Mom. You're late. You have to turn off the computer now."

I blew up. After I'd thoroughly scolded my 6-year-old for all her inconsiderate derailings of my trains of thought, she dissolved into tears and fled to her room - this from a kid who ordinarily has skin as thick as an ankylosaurus's hide. Head in my hands, I mourned my loss of temper and wondered if it was all worth it. Could I really carry on like this? Was it fair to my children?

With a heart so heavy that I could barely go on, I collected my thoughts once again, ignored the sobbing from the bedroom, and finished the chapter. As I closed the file, I noticed my daughter had crept up beside me.

"Mom?" she whispered solemnly. "I'm proud of you for being a writer."

Was it worth it? As I gathered her into my arms – my turn to cry – I had my answer: as much as the children need my attention, they also need me to be true to my own goals, but that doesn't mean they're always going to make it easy!

Joyce Hartley (VA) adapted, for GWS, an article she wrote for her local home-schooling group's newsletter:

Homeschooling is, for our family, more than an educational choice; it is a way of life. We "do school" every hour of every day, all year long. If Phoebe (8) wants to know, at 10 PM on a Saturday night in July, how many moons Jupiter has, I'm not going to tell her that it's not school hours and she needs to wait until a weekday in September for the answer.

But I'm not (nor is my husband) at the children's beck and call, either. My job as it relates to their education is facilitator, but that is not my only job. I also have a job (the kind where you get paid) as well as the things I do that are for me. These things are just as important as my job as homeschooling mom, and they are also important to my children's education.

My job-for-money is as a statistical analyst for the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia. I work in the office two days a week and also work from home. When I work in the office, I use our homeschooling group's child care co-op. Any member of the homeschooling group may participate in the co-op. When a member watches your children, you get negative points (based on time and number of children); when you watch someone else's children, you get positive points. We have a few (very few) other rules, but those are the basics.

What do Phoebe and her 6-year-old brother Max do when I am working at home? The answer is complex. Sometimes they are (I'm ashamed to admit) plugged into a video. Sometimes their father is home, so he is "in charge." Other times I take my cue from them; if I find that they are happily occupied in one way or another, I grab the opportunity to

work for a few minutes. I've had to learn how to work in small bites (five minutes here, ten minutes there) and have also had to accept that I won't always be at a "good stopping place" when I need to stop for one reason or another. When I am working at a program for my job, I still have trouble stopping if it contains errors, but I am getting better at it. Sometimes I get a call from the office that they need such-and-such right now, and the kids understand that; it doesn't happen often and whatever it is doesn't usually take too long, so the children can occupy themselves. If my husband isn't here and I am trying to work, I leave my door open and keep one ear tuned on the kids; if they are outside, I try to keep a window open and regularly check on them. As they get older, it is getting easier.

My job fulfills an essential need in my personality, the logical, compartmentalized, mathematical part. It balances the relaxed approach we take with homeschooling. It also serves a few other functions: it closes (barely) a gap in our budget. It keeps me in the market, so to speak, so that if Something Happens that I need full-time employment, my skills are current. It does some good for my self-esteem too; though that generally isn't an issue now, there was a time when it was (like when both kids were still in diapers and we lived in the boonies). I also think it is important for my children to see me as a worker. I don't want them to get some "Leave it to Beaver" view of the world.

My real work is my quilting. I have had a quilt published in an international magazine and have an article (with accompanying quilt photo) scheduled for publication in another magazine. My quilts have been juried into shows, including one which took my quilt to England. But even without the publications and shows, I would be quilting. It fulfills a basic need for me that I can't quite explain; it keeps me civilized. In the older (diaper) days, my husband and I agreed that I would get one hour each evening that would only be interrupted for emergencies of the 911 type. He would take charge of the kids, and I would go to my room and work on whatever project was current. As the kids have grown, they have been accustomed to my needing that time to work on my quilts and other projects. And when I don't get my quilting time for a few days, I became very difficult to be around (even for me). My quilt connections have also given me a circle of friends that is not based on my children and the other adults' children, but rather based on a common, grown-up interest.

How does this fit into my children's education? I am teaching them the importance of following one's dream. One of the reasons I am homeschooling is that I want my children to have the freedom to explore and experience the world so that one day they may follow their dreams. What sort of example would I be setting if I were to sacrifice all of my own dreams for my children? I have too many quilts to make to wait until they are grown to get started. If I want my children to feel free to have a life when they are grown, I need to have one now.

See? I really am doing it all for my children.

Am I Doing Enough?

Dori Griffin of Tennessee writes in response to the Focus in GWS #112, "How Kids Handle Homeschooling Worries":

I'm a (so-called) junior in high school this year, and for the most part, my high school education has been very self-directed and non-traditional. I'm fairly confident that what I'm doing is right for me, but sometimes I do feel a brief twinge of doubt. There aren't many high school-aged homeschoolers in the support group my family is part of, and most of those do "school at home." This sometimes leaves me with a gap in the area of moral support; I don't have anyone with whom I can really discuss the specific challenges of guiding your own education. To the question, "Have you decided what you're going to study this year?" or anything similar, most of my homeschooled friends answer, "As if I had any choice." And then I'm surrounded by public school students, who praise traditional education and glorify their school-related activities. They talk about their

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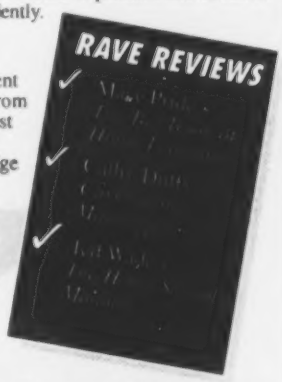

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computer labs, their science labs, the advanced-placement courses they're taking, and the opportunities available to them.

Compare that to my philosophy of education. I study the things I want to, using the tools I want to use. I avoid textbooks, workbooks, and all other staples of modern education. I'm at the end of the first quarter of my school year now, and my major accomplishments include research for the second draft of my science fiction novel, a study of art history (using Eyewitness Art and Masters of Art books from the library), some progress in my Saxon Algebra Two book, but not a lot, and starting a literary magazine called *The Inkwell*. Not really what most people would define as schoolwork, and yet I've learned a lot.

Sometimes I worry that I'm not adequately preparing myself for whatever it is I'm supposed to be getting ready for. I don't want to go to college, have no career in mind, and really abhor the thought of a regular job. So added to my very rare fears of not doing enough "school," I have the occasional thought that perhaps if I'd been doing regular school, I'd know what I wanted to do after I graduated. However, as I'm really very happy with my learning as it stands now, I never do anything about these worries. I simply tell myself that it isn't necessary to choose a career at the age of 16, and I go on studying art history and writing my novel. Maybe that's not properly dealing with the problem (if it is a problem at all), but I know I don't want to trade in my life for a school-book education.

Occasionally (well, really a lot more often than that) well-meaning people, both adults and teenagers, ask questions that cause me to stop and think yet again. They ask what I "do for school," as if school has to be something apart from real life. Then I ask myself if school really should be set apart as a necessary evil, and if I should be doing more traditional studies. It would make things easier, in some respects, to be able to say "I'm studying cellular division," or whatever, in response to such questions. But would I be happy with that? I know I wouldn't. Lately, lots of people ask me about college. For a while I told everyone I didn't want to go to college – because I don't – but the response to that was usually very negative, if polite. Now I tell people that I don't plan on going to college directly out of high school. That seems to satisfy most people – maybe they assume I want to work for a while and save money for college. Still, dealing with questions about college education raises questions in my own mind. What if college really is necessary, after all? That thought plagues me, because I know that emotionally, intellectually, and even spiritually, school is the wrong choice for me. I've found that out through experience.

It's probably clear that I have a lot of questions about whether my version of education is really "enough." I don't know that I'd call them doubts, though, as I'm very sure that this is what I want for my life right now. I haven't hit on any easy answers; I don't think there are any. I keep on evaluating what I'm doing, trying to measure it against what I know I'm capable of, not against the model of the public schools. I know I'm learning, and learning a lot, and learning the things I feel it's important for me to learn. But dealing with the rest of the world, which expects eleventh graders to be taking Physics and Algebra and English and applying for college, is still hard, and I don't expect it to get any easier. But I think that if I'm sure I'm learning, I can deal with the problems and questions that arise.

Another thing that comforts me is that I know I can find any information I'll ever need. I've learned how to research well, and my basic skills in reading, math, and communication definitely aren't lacking. Maybe this is my answer to the outside world: "I may not have a uniform body of knowledge that's been spoonfed to me but I'm capable of discovering anything on my own." Dealing with the world that expects me to be part of, or similar to, the product of public education today is really my biggest concern. So perhaps, if I feel confident that I can represent myself and my method intelligently to this group of people, I've really answered all my questions. I'll be finding out soon, I suppose.

Homeschooling an Autistic Child

Henry Lappen of Massachusetts writes:

Having hated school since second grade, I wanted to homeschool my children. My partner was interested but less sure. I am a traveling juggler, and I envisioned bringing my older son with me to performances. He would read road signs and maps, learn geography, identify birds, talk about the world, etc. He would watch the shows I performed (often in schools, ironically) and help me pack up afterwards. I would have a companion. It would be just like the John McCutcheon song "The Awful Hilly Daddy Willy Trip."

Of course, kids have their own lives. Jasper turned out to have a mild form of autism known as Asperger's Syndrome. This made it both easier and harder to fulfill my dream; different, anyway.

At first, any traveling with him was too difficult. But when he taught himself to read (around his fourth birthday), he became interested in road signs, and then we couldn't keep him out of the car. Day trips became a delight. He would announce the speed limit, then chastise me for speeding. We'd check the map together and he would find the correct route sign. He'd tell me every billboard, mile marker, and graffiti we passed. While I performed, he would sit in the audience, sometimes watching, sometimes doing his own work (reading or making maps). If I taught a workshop, he'd join in, giving pointers to the other kids. Back home, he'd rush to tell his mom all about it. She would be delighted to see him, having had an "easy day" with only one kid.

Due to his difficulty tolerating stress and his inability to use bathrooms out of our house, we would have to carefully plan and limit his trips. But when he did join me, the whole family felt great.

Jasper's brain clearly works differently from other children's. This was noticeable from early on. He has extreme sensitivity to noise, clothing, smells, and crowded places. Often he would be terrified of sounds I couldn't

even hear. He also has difficulty with peer relations and social cues.

On the other hand, Jasper has many gifts. He has an amazing capacity to focus on his own interests, tuning out any and all distractions. Thus, I feel homeschooling would be ideal for him. By 4 1/2, he had taught himself to read and write and tell time. With a bit of help, arithmetic soon followed. Then he became fascinated with maps. By 5 1/2, he could sit at the table by himself, for two hours or more, making map after map. Some were fanciful creations with hairpin turns on 20-lane interstates; others were accurate portrayals of Amherst (our town), the state of Massachusetts, or the world.

I remember one day going in a van to South Amherst with two other families. I joked that we were going to South America. As we turned on a new road Jasper wasn't familiar with, he asked, "Are we at the skinny part now?" At first no one knew what he was talking about. But when I realized and explained that he thought we were in Central America, everyone was amazed at his knowledge of geography.

It turns out that fascination with maps is actually common in people with Asperger's Syndrome, and this helped to confirm his diagnosis. Living with Jasper has been quite a roller coaster ride. The joys of watching his incredible pace of learning are tempered by his intense anxiety about stuff which most kids slide through with minimal trouble. Changes in routines, or trips to the doctor, must be carefully explained. Even getting him to eat or drink, some days, can be difficult. And extended family trips have been on hold until now, because of toileting.

As for homeschooling, I really want to do it, but I'm not sure we can cope without a lot more support. In a public school, Jasper would be provided with a variety of specialized services, possibly including his own aide. We need to find out if any of this is available to us if we homeschool and how using these services would affect our unschooling approach.

We also wonder if school might be a good choice for him. I would hate to stifle his focused learning and curiosity, as I feel mine was stifled. But on the other hand, Jasper thrives on structure, something we lack in our definitely not 9-5 lives. And maybe in school he would be pushed to learn to relate better to other children when he has to. He has never mentioned going to school though he sees all our neighbors go, but part of him would probably enjoy it.

So, here it is September and Jasper is 6 and still not going to school. Our slow fact-finding and decision-making pace has turned into a de facto decision to homeschool. We would love to hear from others who are homeschooling a special needs child.

Janet Appleby wrote in the August 1996 issue of the British newsletter Education Otherwise *about her son with Asperger's Syndrome:*

... Ben was only diagnosed at 8. Until then, he was constantly criticized for bad behavior and we were seen as failing parents. I dislike unnecessary labels and initially found the diagnosis hard to accept, but in fact it has been a lifeline, enabling everyone to see Ben differently and enabling him to acquire a more positive self-image.

Ben attended school (undiagnosed) for nearly four years. He was always unhappy there and became increasingly uncooperative and disruptive. The situation was complicated by the fact that he is highly gifted in some areas, especially reading and math, which meant that a lot of schoolwork seemed boring, and he developed a habit of daydreaming, which he still has. For a long time I assumed this was his only problem, and it is hard enough to deal with anyway. I only withdrew him from school (which meant sacrificing my own part-time job) when life became unbearable and I was frightened that Ben or another child would be seriously hurt. I dithered for several months (especially as I also had a baby and another child at the same school), but was encouraged to take the final plunge first by discovering that a friend's brother was home-educating and secondly by my initial contact with Education Otherwise which made homeschooling seem feasible and practical.

Our concern about Ben's behavior had already led me to the doctor and the waiting list at the local psychiatric unit. Withdrawing him from school meant he was suddenly at the top of the list! He had a three-month full-time placement where the Asperger's was diagnosed. By this time I was taking on the challenge of home education, so I was secretly relieved when they concluded that the combination of his high ability and social immaturity meant that there was no local public school placement for him. They still insisted that he ought to be in full-time school in order to develop his social skills, but this would have meant trying to force him into another unsuitable mold and more inevitable failure. So I felt justified in refusing (there is always the worry that

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overprotective parents will keep a child at home against the child's best interests. I am sure that happens sometimes, and I did not wish to be doing so myself). So for the past 18 months I have been teaching him at home. ...

Unusually for a child with Asperger's, Ben does have a few friends – as long as they don't meet up too often. He has one friend whom he sees most weeks, which makes a huge difference. He is finally learning to play in the street (sometimes) without immediately precipitating a conflict. He is also learning socially from playing with his sister Anna, who is the one person he will sometimes put before himself. I agree that school provides an artificial and sometimes antisocial environment. ... However, there are children like Ben who do not "pick up" social skills from normal experience and need to be positively and actively taught in a structured group setting. For two years, I have been saying that this is the one area where I want professional help. I have recently been able to make contact with a local special school, which I hope will prove fruitful.

It is very demanding trying to teach a child like Ben without any support or help. His autism means that he needs a predictable routine which, after two years, I am still failing to provide. He also rushes at things without reading instructions carefully and is very easily discouraged. In addition, he refuses to do anything open-ended (he needs clearly defined tasks) or personal (e.g. "My day at the beach") because anything to do with himself he sees as secret information, not to be divulged. I paid a tutor for 1-2 hours a week last year and he loved his time with her and would work hard. It is not so easy for me as I lack the teaching skills and Ben lacks patience and interest except in his few obsessions (another feature of autism). I also have trouble keeping up with his intellectual demands and craving for novelty. He is often ahead of me and is easily bored by essential routine tasks (e.g., writing things down).

On the other hand, my relationship with him has improved greatly now that I am not forcing him to go to school and am giving him lots of time and attention. One drawback, though, is that he is now very dependent on me and tends to "shadow" me whenever we go anywhere – if anything, his social confidence has worsened. However, he has learned a lot from interacting with Anna, who is very socially mature for her age. Yet his excessive demands also mean that Anna has suffered from a lack of my time and attention.

I am hoping to set up a local support group when I have time and energy, which may help. ...

For some further resources, see the organizations National Challenged Homeschoolers Association, National Handicapped Homeschoolers Association, and the newsletter *At Our Own Pace*, all listed in the "Special Interest Groups" section of our Directory of Organizations, in this issue, p. 45. Also, see the "autism" and "physical handicaps" section of our Resource People list, next published in GWS #115. ◆

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A New Look at Attention Deficit Disorder

Many homeschoolers are familiar with Thomas Armstrong's book *In Their Own Way*, which we have been carrying for years. Now, in his new book, *The Myth of the A.D.D. Child*, Armstrong offers an astute challenge to the accepted notion of Attention Deficit Disorder. But he doesn't deny that some children have a hard time paying attention and concentrating, and he offers parents many concrete ideas about how to help.

In this interview, Armstrong explains his problem with the A.D.D. label, tells why he believes homeschooling can be an ideal alternative for kids labeled A.D.D., and offers a few of his positive strategies for helping such kids.

[SS:] When you say "the myth of the A.D.D. child," what are you claiming is a myth?

Some people get upset when they hear me talking about the myth, because they think I'm saying that their kids don't have any problems. On the contrary, I'm quite aware that many kids have tremendous difficulty with paying attention, with organization, with being impulsive and overactive. In fact, these difficulties seem to be epidemic in our society. The question is whether or not the concept of Attention Deficit Disorder is a good way to account for those kinds of difficulties.

Basically, when I refer to the A.D.D. myth, I'm using the term "myth" in a way that's probably closer to its original connotation of "story." Myths were shaped by cultures to make sense of the world, and I think the A.D.D. concept is trying to make sense of an aspect of our world, but it's not doing a very good job. There are a lot of holes in it, and it doesn't account for the great wealth of positive attributes that I see in kids who have the A.D.D. label. The trouble is that A.D.D. is based on a medical paradigm, which sees things in terms of disease, disorder, and dysfunction. If you look in the literature about A.D.D. kids, you'll see nothing about talents, abilities, intelligence, interests. To me, this is very dangerous, because if children are having trouble, what they need more than anything is to be around people who see the best in them. But if the only tool adults have to evaluate these kids is based on disease and deficit, that's what they'll see.

My doctoral dissertation was on the strengths of people who have been labeled Learning Disabled. Today I would look at the strengths of people who have been labeled A.D.D. Research suggests a strong link between the symptoms of A.D.D. and the traits of creativity, for example. Parents and teachers often tell me that kids who have been labeled A.D.D. are artistic, or they love music, or they're really dramatic. It's when they're sitting in front of a worksheet page that everything falls apart.

And so you're trying to suggest that the worksheet is part of the problem, which makes your book into a critique not just of A.D.D. but of conventional schooling itself.

Yes, the A.D.D. paradigm is based on a model of education that is very conservative: the teacher at the front lecturing and giving instructions, and the kids sitting at desks. But kids today have moved way beyond that model. They're being raised in a short-attention-span culture; they're processing a lot of information very quickly and learning to do several things at the same time. For today's kids, the old model of education is often just not stimulating enough. Some research suggests that kids labeled A.D.D. are basically *underaroused* – they're not getting enough stimulation, in other words, so they become hyperactive to stimulate themselves. That explains why the drug Ritalin, a stimulant, calms them down, because it provides what they experience as enough stimulation.

Of course, I can't help thinking, what if those children had others ways of getting the stimulation they crave?

It would seem to me that homeschooling would be tailor-made for the child who is having trouble in that worksheet wasteland and getting slapped with the A.D.D. label. Parents tell me, "They say my child can't pay attention, but he can spend two hours

building a Lego structure" – or whatever it is that he really likes to do. When the A.D.D. people heard observations like that, they came back and said, "Oh, that's part of the problem: they're hyperfocusing." So the child can't win: either he can't pay attention, or when he does, it's the wrong kind of attention. But I think of what Maria Montessori called "the absorbent mind," that experience of the child getting totally caught up in the learning event. I don't see that as a problem. Homeschooling environments, when they're structured in a positive, creative way, give kids a chance to be drawn into their interests, without the bother of bells ringing and all that rigamarole. That's assuming, of course, that homeschoolers aren't just using the same materials that are being used in schools.

Have you seen that happen?

I've seen sometimes that parents have the good impulse to take a child out of school, but then, because that child has been labeled A.D.D., the parents think to themselves, "I've got an even greater responsibility," and they go back to the same sources looking for help. They go back to the very people who came up with the A.D.D. label, so they end up replicating, at home, the very problems they were trying to escape. To me, the value of homeschooling is that it gives the parent and child a chance to make a fresh start, to have a whole different way of looking at learning and educating, and to treat the child in a positive way. When parents make the decision to homeschool, I think they ought to take full advantage of it.

Let's talk about the symptoms of A.D.D. In your book you say that there are factors both outside and inside the child that can account for those symptoms. What are some of the external factors, first?

Stress is a big one. I think that part of what we see is a very natural and even healthy response to a lot of the craziness of our society. One of the things that concerns me is that people will say, "This child has A.D.D. and a mood disorder," or "A.D.D. and an anxiety disorder," which is to me a way of sidestepping the fact that the A.D.D. itself may be due to depression or stress. Kids who have trouble concentrating may have that trouble because of events happening in the family, the neighborhood, or the broader society. My concern is that if A.D.D. is zeroed in on as the problem, the more serious issues might go unchecked.

Then, as I was saying earlier, schooling itself might be part of the problem. When John Goodlad was writing his study of schooling, he went into a thousand classrooms, and he and the other researchers were struck by how boring the classrooms were. Even the kids who were doing fine complained about how boring it was! Those were the kids who say, "This is boring" or "This is crazy" but go along with it anyway. For whatever reasons, kids who are labeled A.D.D. are those who can't or won't put up with the situation. And that may not be such a bad thing, because they're telling us: this isn't working. They're harbingers of whatever we need to reform in our schools. If we take the cue from them rather than seeing them as the source of the problem, we'll be better off. It seems to me that in the sixties and seventies, if a child had a problem in school, we didn't immediately say, "This is a neurological disorder." We said, "What in the environment can we change to make a better fit between the child and the context?" Now, the neurological explanation is very satisfying in a way, because it doesn't *blame* the child – after all, he can't help it – but it does locate the problem within the child rather than saying that the problem is in the system.

Kids who are labeled A.D.D. are those who can't or won't put up with the situation. And that may not be such a bad thing, because they're telling us: this isn't working. They're harbingers of whatever we need to reform in our schools.

This leads to what I was asking earlier, about what factors are *inside the child.*

I fully believe that some kids who are labeled A.D.D. are different from the norm, but that's different from saying they have a neurological *disorder.* I'm talking about neurological variation; I'm not saying they have a defect in their brains. It's important that we understand this distinction, because it affects how we approach the situation.

It also interested me that you say these kids may just have a different temperament from their parents'. That's a topic that comes up frequently in GWS, the notion of compatible or incompatible temperaments. If a child who is very active and outgoing is born to parents who are the same way, things are fine, but if that same child has parents who are quieter and more retiring, the parents may find it hard to deal with their child.

I like to think of this the way Jung did, that children often embody the blind spots or the unrealized aspects of their parents, and that children compel parents to deal with things they didn't have to deal with before. If the parents say, "Boy, he's got a whole different way of approaching life; how do I deal with this difference, how do we learn from each other?", that's more helpful than saying, "How do I get my child to comply?" which is what a lot of the A.D.D. literature is about.

You talk about the difference between externally controlling kids and internally empowering them.

When I was looking through the A.D.D. literature and the catalogs, what struck me was how many of the books and the devices were geared toward control – not seeing the child as a human being with his own choices, desires, beliefs, and interests, but rather as someone that needs to be corralled, channeled, subdued, in whatever ways will work. So the catalogs offer all sorts of point ma-

chines, devices that help the kids pay attention, rewards and token economies – all those things that Alfie Kohn did such a good job of critiquing in his book *Punished by Rewards*, so I won't repeat that critique. But I'm talking about something that John Holt inspired in me, which is to treat the child with a deep respect, as a living, breathing, thinking, choosing organism, who should be trusted.

So many of your suggested "50 Ways to Improve Your Child's Behavior and Attention Span" are interesting. I want to talk about a couple that seem especially in tune with the GWS philosophy. Earlier, you mentioned finding out what interests your child. What about two of your other suggestions, "Offer your child real-life tasks to do" and "Give your child choices"?

A.D.D. symptoms can also be a response to having to do things that aren't real or meaningful. So how do we find ways of engaging children in the world that allow them to be challenged and to develop competence? Robert Brooks at Harvard tells the story of a kid in a hospital breaking all the light bulbs. Finally Brooks put him in charge of replacing all the light bulbs, and after that, not only did he stop breaking the bulbs but he made sure no one else broke them, either. It's so often true: when kids are given responsibility for real things, they *become* far more responsible. In fact, it's true of adults too.

As for choices, in the world of behavior modification, the child doesn't have any choices. And in the world of school in general, kids are shuffled around, not having choices, which can certainly lead to frustration, aggression, wanting to fight back – in other words, symptoms of A.D.D. When I say offer choices, I'm not just talking about "choose between this spelling list or that one," but meaningful choices. In the homeschooling world, the choices open up considerably. But, especially if a child isn't used to making choices, you don't just sit down and say, "OK, what do you want to do?" You don't go from zero to sixty; instead, you can become a kind of choice coach. Talk with your children about what's available, and help them think through their own processes.

Another suggestion you give is "have your child teach another child." This can work especially well in homeschooling, too, because it can happen not just in the formal tutoring situations you describe but just naturally in the family or with friends of different ages.

Then what happens is that the child who may have felt irresponsible can now feel responsible. "Now *I'm* the mentor, the one who needs to inspire someone else." It creates a shift in their attitude toward themselves.

Let's talk about food briefly, because I know many people are interested in the relationship between food and attention deficit or hyperactivity.

I've got three food strategies that I describe in my book. One of them is easy: eat a balanced breakfast. The other two are more difficult: find out about food allergies, and try the Feingold Diet. The Feingold Diet is not for everybody, but the research suggests that there's a small group of kids who can be helped by it. The only way to find out is to try it, and obviously it will require the child's willingness.

I also want to talk about medication for a minute. ...

Yes, please do.

It may seem like I'm saying, never use medication, but I'm not saying that at all. I've seen too many studies and heard of too many cases suggesting the positive effects that Ritalin or other psycho-stimulants can have. And if your child is currently taking one of these drugs, don't try to take him off on your own; it's too dangerous. Do this only with a physician.

But I do think that the medication is overused and is chosen too quickly, before other alternatives are explored. Parents should know what all the pros and cons of Ritalin are, and in the A.D.D. literature, they tend to shortchange you on a discussion of the cons. Particularly, that the more children look to medication for anwers, the less they look to themselves and their own capabilities. Giving a child a pill is easier than some of the alternatives I suggest, and that's why many people are using it. The problem is, the symptom may go away but the deeper issues don't. And the pill can be a way of distancing yourself from your child, a way of saying, "This is all I'm willing to commit to the growth of my child." But I say, it's not *either* medication *or* something else. You can try the medication, and in fact you may then find that it's easier to try some of the other strategies as well.

The Myth of the A.D.D. Child, a hardcover book, is available from us for $23.95 + $4.50 s/h. Another book by Thomas Armstrong, *In Their Own Way*, is also available here for $9.95 + $3.50 s/h.

Another new book about A.D.D. that has recently crossed our desks is called *The Wildest Colts Make the Best Horses*, by John Breeding. The author offers workshops and consultations. For info, call 512-326-8326. ◆

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Focus

Learning Through Reading

Homeschooling children and teenagers describe how something they've read has opened their eyes to a new idea or a new way of thinking.

Understanding Cruelty

From Arwen Main (FL):

Earlier this year, my friend lent me a book called *Go Ask Alice*. It is the published dairy of a teen girl and is about her struggle with drug addiction, how she first began taking drugs and then how they killed her. She was 15, a year younger than me, when she died.

After reading this book, I thought for a long time about why this girl started taking drugs, why she would not tell her parents when she needed help, why she did not ask for help when in her diary she said many times that she wanted it. For the first time I really tried to follow someone else's thoughts and try to understand their behavior – understand what they feel and why they might feel that way. I saw that she didn't tell her parents because she didn't trust them enough to tell them and because she was afraid of what would happen, and what the other kids would do, if she told.

The book gave me a new perspective on how mean people can be (the "friends" in her high school were horrible). Before I read it, I would not let myself accept how cruel people could be. My father used to tell me, but I didn't want to hear it, to know about it. I wanted to believe that people were basically nice. But the book made me pay attention to the cruelty that exists.

It also gave me a better understanding of why cruel people act the way they do. I always hear people on the news or in discussions talk about most criminals in very dehumanizing terms, and though I can understand why they do that, this book drove home the realization that criminals are still people. I came to see that there is a cause and effect, that something happens to make people act cruelly or criminally.

I've been raised to be aware and to trust my intuition in "strange" situations, and I've come to perceive other people as my biggest threat. That's not to say I'm paranoid or avoid going out. But I've become more aware who is around me and what they are doing.

I am glad I read *Go Ask Alice*, even though it was very sad, because it gave me a vivid picture of a piece of society I know little about.

Thinking about Friendship

From Emily Shell (VT):

At first I was just a Beatles fan, and then I wanted to learn what was behind the music, so I read *A Day in the Life*, by Mark Hertsgard, which is about the music. Mark Hertsgard never met the Beatles, so I decided I needed something that came more from the inside. I read *I Me Mine*, by George Harrison, *John Lennon in My Life*, by Peter Shotton (John's best friend), and two cookbooks by Linda McCartney, Paul's wife. I loved these books; they all opened my eyes in different ways.

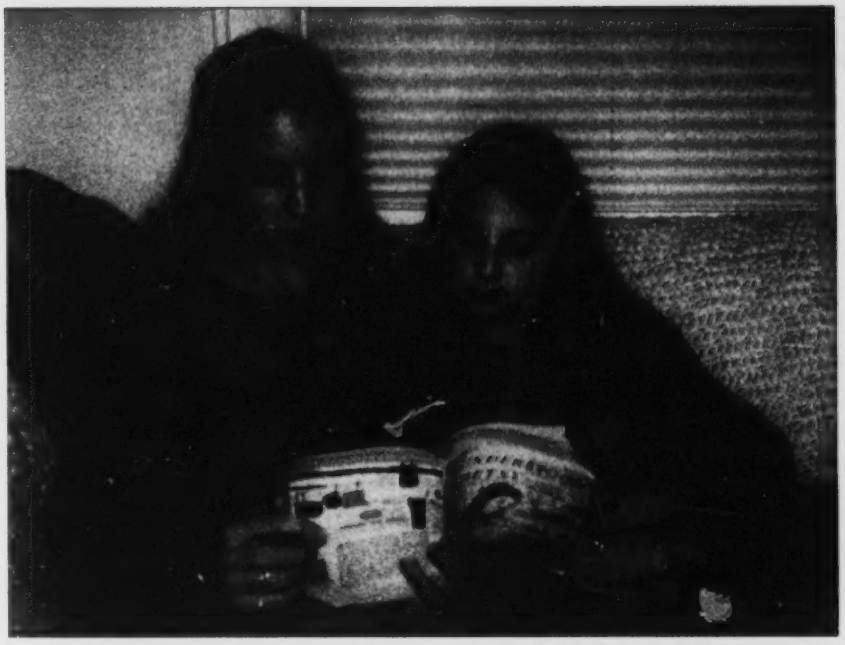
Peter Shotton changed the way I think about friendships. His friendship with John came from so deep that nothing could end it. I think I never knew how important a lifelong friend could be before. It's as if you always have this person who has no other role but to be your friend, no other obligation. Not a parent, who is always thinking of you as their creation, their bit they have contributed to the world; not a lover who has to be the ultimate partner, who will be with you one-on-one for the rest of your life; and not a child whom you are always looking out for and protecting. A lifelong friend would be someone who is not necessarily with you all the time but is always there for you if you need them, and who you are always there to help. It's a kind of love that is not always talked about, but does exist; I know this from my own experience and I think everybody should know too. I always just took this for granted; I never realized how important it is in my own life until I read about it. I have a lifelong friend and I will

never let our friendship die. It really could not die, anyway, because it goes so far back; we have such a backlog of memories already and I am only 14!

I read the next book, *I Me Mine*, in two days - I just spent all day reading it. When I read the lyrics that take up most of the book, I felt that I had never experienced writing so fully before. It was like taking a bath in truth. All day I could think of nothing else. I just sat on my bed with the window open, the sights, smells, and sounds of summer swarming around me while I read. I carry a little bit of that feeling around with me all the time. It's what George Harrison has said so often, "When you've seen beyond yourself, then you will find peace of mind is waiting there." I saw beyond myself that day and I will never let go of what I saw that I still have.

Next were the cookbooks. I was a meat-eater last year, but I had been thinking of trying out a vegetarian diet for health reasons. Linda McCartney's books have shown me that vegetarianism is a lot more than that. It's a sense of well-being, knowing no animal died for my plate, to put it as she did. Her story is that one day she was eating lamb and she looked out the window to see her sheep grazing in the field. She realized how much she loves them and she asked herself: why was she eating them? I know the feeling: it's like stepping back and *seeing*, as opposed to just looking. I have enjoyed many of the recipes from her books as well; I will never eat the same way again.

So there you have it: my journey through reading. I got ahold of all these books through interlibrary loan.



Alison Nihart (left) reading Understood Betsy *to her sister*

Some People Don't Understand

From Alison Nihart of New York:

Recently, my friend Sarah Mantell and I were exchanging books that we thought the other should read. Somewhere in our conversation, Sarah said to me, "Oh! I think you'll like this book a lot. It's called *Understood Betsy* by Dorothy Canfield." So, usually liking the books she suggests, I borrowed it from her.

I started reading it and by the ninth page, my heart had gone out to Elizabeth Ann (the main character) over and over again. Elizabeth Ann's aunt Frances overdoes her protection for the 9-year-old and doesn't let her niece think for herself. Then, when Elizabeth Ann is sent away to a relative's house, she is depended on to wash her own dishes, get her own lunch, walk herself to school and figure things out without anyone telling her. Of course, she is nowhere near able to understand things very well, and that is what really opened my eyes.

I think my ability to understand things is pretty good (please don't think I'm conceited), and reading *Understood Betsy* was when I realized that some people just can't understand and figure things out as well as other people. At one part in the book, her cousin Ann refers to being able to "shoot an apple through an oak plank," and Elizabeth Ann thinks that is ridiculous. Then, later, she realizes that that is just a fancy way to say that an apple is hard. Of course, that would occur to you right away, but as I said earlier, Elizabeth Ann had never thought for herself before. If she had been brought up to think for herself and to hear people talk using expressions, she might have understood better. As the story goes on, however, she gets used to the way her relatives talk, and by the end of the book, she has figured out how to resolve many problems. Before I read this book, I figured that if you told a joke to anyone, they would automatically understand. Now I realize that not all people have the ability to immediately understand what you are talking about.

Reading Leads to a Bicycling Adventure

From Lorin Black (WI):

Five or six years ago, my mom borrowed the book *Hey Mom, Can I Ride My Bike Across America?*, by John Siegel Boettner, through interlibrary loan. Once I got my hands on it, no one else in the family had a chance. Unfortunately, we had to return it before I finished reading it, but it still changed the way I thought, if not my entire life.

The book is by a teacher from California who led a group of five 12- and 13-year-olds on a coast-to-coast bicycle trip. I have always known people who are into bicycling (though more at the racing end of the spectrum), but I had never really thought about anyone bicycling hundreds of miles, let alone across the country.

Lorin Black (far left) on his bike trip

Hey Mom... opened my eyes not only to the fact that people do such things but also to the wonders of traveling on bicycles: noticing things you don't notice when traveling at 60 miles an hour, meeting people from all walks of life, visiting small, out-of-the-way places, and the friendships that form among people traveling on the trip and with the people you meet along the way.

Then, about two years ago, I read a notice in our county 4-H newsletter announcing a tri-state bicycle trip (South Dakota, Minnesota, and Wisconsin). I probably wouldn't even have thought about applying if I had not read Hey Mom..., but I did apply, and I got to go. I spent several months training, riding up some of the biggest hills in the area, and getting used to my bicycle. I also had to write letters to all of the County Extension Agents on our route (about 25 of them) asking for host families and for information about their county.

I can't say I quite had the same experience as the kids in the book (I shared very few interests with the other members of my trip, whereas in the book, they did share interests), but having read *Hey Mom. ..* I was able to expect some of the experiences that I did have. For example, in the book the kids often met people who couldn't believe they were bicycling across the country. I don't know how many times someone said to us, "I don't believe you," or "I wouldn't make it to the edge of town," when we told them how far we were going.

The book also talks about the hardships the group faced – for example, a tornado hits their camp at one point! – and yet they don't give up. We had our share of hardships, too. At the beginning of the trip, while we were swimming, someone broke into our support van and stole several wallets and cameras. This experience brought us closer together because we now had to operate for fifteen days on a limited budget.

Since my trip, I have read other accounts of bicycle trips and other travel stories, but none of them quite equal *Hey Mom...* in my mind.

Olden Days Weren't Perfect

From Aleta Rees (MN):

I have homeschooled all my life and am almost 11. In just about every book I've read, I learned about the lifestyle when the book took place. I learn about historical events when I read historical novels. In some books, the ideas I get are way different from just plain facts and dates. I used to think the world was perfect in the olden days. I'd read the *Little House* books and think, "Oh, I wish I lived back then!" But as I got older, I discovered from other books that there was always stealing and murdering, and I've learned about anti-semitism and about how women were treated like possessions. I learned that many things that women did to make themselves stylish really hurt. I realize now that bad things have always happened.

I also learned that some historical events are more complex than I had thought. For example, I thought that in the Second World War, just Jews were killed. I learned this was not so from reading *The Silver Sword*, by Ian Serraillier, which is about a Polish family that is torn apart by the war when they subtly defy the Nazis. They happened to make it through the war, but many people in the book who did not weren't Jewish.

A book that really opened my eyes was *Thunder Rolling in the Mountains*, by Scott O'Dell. I'd never realized that it took just a few people with hot tempers, anger, and fear to start a war. I also learned that it wasn't always that white men were bad and the Indians were good. From that book, I found that there are good and bad people in every race.

Another example of seeing something differently through reading is that I had not thought much about romantic love until I read *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. After that, my image was that love is a horrible and hurtful thing. I wondered why people ever loved anyone, but then after I read *Little Women*, my ideas completely changed. When I read Amy's letters home after she was engaged to Laurie, they were full of how beautiful love was and how much she loved Laurie. Now I understand that love used the wrong way can be very hurtful, but I also realize how beautiful it can be.

I think different people get different ideas from books. Sometimes my brother and I read the same book and get different ideas, and if my whole family read the same book, each of our views would be different.

Learning Tolerance, Discovering Possibility

From Peter Kowalke (OH):

Tony Robbins's motto is "Live life with passion!" I like that outlook, myself. Although often chided for such a naive and optimistic approach, in the same breath I am also commended for my boundless enthusiasm and

genuine sentiment for those with whom I'm in contact.

I first came in contact with Tony's outlook when I was an impressionable yet cynical 14-year-old (I'm 17 now). Cruising the public library, I spotted his book in a pile of hardcovers that were waiting to be shelved. It wasn't so much the name that drew my glance, but the color of its cover. It was shiny, and a reflective, bright gold – I was just drawn to a state of intrigue. I plucked *Awaken the Giant Within* from the stack.

Oh, it was one of those cheesy "pop psychology" books, I thought. But I kept looking. Fourteen is such a pivotal age for beliefs, and I was left to explore relatively unencumbered. It would be so nice, I dreamed, to mature into a successful, exciting, proactive millionaire such as Tony Robbins describes. At 14, however, I didn't even know what "proactive" meant. All I knew was that some people were successful and others were – well, not as successful. Logically, therefore, there must be some secret formula! OK, maybe it wasn't that simple. There had to be at least some guidelines, though.

Tony Robbins claimed to have the answers. I had watched parts of his infomercials, often wondering if the books, tapes, and testimonials were anything more than cheap plastic that broke down and collapsed upon close scrutiny. Now I could find out. I would read the book and either I would satiate my curiosity and put to rest the notion of "instant success" or I would achieve what Tony claimed I could. I started reading right where I stood.

The first chapter made a plethora of promises. I grew weary, but I was not so experienced and cynical as to close the book and pronounce it fraudulent – yet. After about the interval when "yet" would come into play, a strange sort of realization began to form. Three days into my reading, I suddenly burst into a smile and, to my dismay, found that the book was delivering on its intentions. With each chapter, Tony handed me more and more tools to allow me to govern my destiny. Stated simply, I came to realize that there are no rules, only options.

Awaken the Giant Within sparked a mental reorganization in me. Gradually, I found many qualities that I've come to regard as my virtues. Chiefly, the book taught me tolerance and the meaning of the word "limitless." Although I've always been a relatively tolerant soul, in the three years since first noticing that shiny, gold book, I can honestly say that there has not even been one moment when I've felt hate for another human being (or animal, while we're on the subject). Disappointment sometimes, yeah. Anger on occasion – that too. But no matter what someone may say or how they may inflict me with pain, I can always see where they concocted their beliefs. I might not agree, but at least I understand.

The idea of limitless horizons also made a big imapct on me. Less than a year after reading *Awaken the Giant*, I began my own publishing house, dubbed "Twisted Teen Publishing" at first. The name didn't stick (we're now PSK Publishing) but the principle behind it endured. I went on to found *Spiral Chambers* (a poetry syndicate), then *Nation* magazine, composed of writing by schooled and unschooled teenagers. All this from a kid who didn't know what paragraph indentation was until the age of 13.

PSK Publishing has been an exercise in the possibilities. *Nation*, especially, has continually reaffirmed the art of the possible; the more I push the limits of what I dream to be possible, the more spectacular the results. My current quest is the transfer from small press 'zine to full-scale mag-azine (or half-scale, even). I'm also thinking about partially subsidizing my college tuition via *Nation*, a truly exciting concept. When I look back, all those promises Tony Robbins made seem far from quackery. I'm not a super-successful entrepreneur, nor am I famous and perpetually happy yet. There has to be a starting point somewhere, though.

You can't judge a book by its cover, but how about its *color*?

Nation is available for $2 an issue by writing Peter at 5998 Taylor Rd, Painesville OH 44077-9157. ◆

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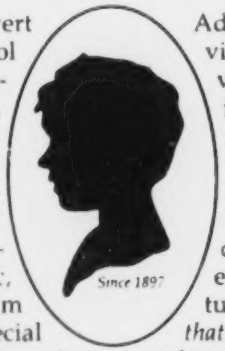

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Watching Children Learn

Mother and Son Learning Music Together

Sue Smith-Heavenrich (NY) writes:

I have been singing and playing guitar and recorder since my early Girl Scouting days. But it's only been in the last year or so that I've really learned to read music. I'm not sure how I got through glee and junior choir and *a capella*. Somehow I could learn the music by listening to it. Not that I was a complete music illiterate. Though I couldn't read the sheet music, I knew that if the black round things went up, then my voice needed to go up too. And I had an intuitive grasp of intervals. I just couldn't tell a B-flat from a C-sharp, unless I heard it, and only this week did I come to an understanding of what 6/8 time really means.

What's really neat is the way I'm learning. You see, my children are teaching me *even though they're not aware that they're doing so.*

All along we'd been singing folk songs, drumming on anything that made noise, clapping rhythms. But as they grew older, I felt my children needed the discipline of working with an instrument. So about three years ago I decided they should study music in a more formal manner. Since I already played the recorder, I figured that would be an easy instrument for them to learn on. Besides, plastic recorders are cheap – only about four or five dollars.

What really helped was finding a book in the children's section of the library on teaching yourself recorder. It had easy-to-read text, great fingering diagrams, and it used numbers instead of music notation – at least in the first couple of chapters. Our written music looked something like this: 1,2,3,1,2,3 ... . Each number corresponded to a finger that covered a particular hole on the recorder.

In fifteen minutes, Coulter (who was 6 at the time) was playing his first melody, "Hot Cross Buns." After introducing a few tunes this way, the book presented songs in conventional music notation (notes on a staff). Someone mentioned to me that Suzuki students start off listening, rather than reading music, so I decided that we would continue learning songs by number for a while. I transcribed familiar nursery songs and easy folk tunes into lines of numbers. It was fairly easy, because the songs had only 4 to 6 notes.

When Coulter wanted to learn more songs, I realized we'd need to learn to read music. I invested a few dollars in two recorder books: *The Usborn Book of Easy Recorder Tunes* and Mel Bay's *You Can Teach Yourself Recorder*. It was money well spent, as we are still using those books. I also purchased a notebook with music staves printed on the pages – another good investment.

Fortunately, the recorder books have great fingering diagrams and assume the student knows little about music. Coulter realized immediately that the musical notes were a sort of code and represented the same sounds that our "play by numbers" system represented. Since he loved anything to do with secret codes, decoding music became a game. Thus "3" became a "G", sitting on the second line of the staff, "2" became an "A," and so on.

Each week we spent fifteen to twenty minutes working from the books in a formal lesson. We clapped the rhythms, learned new fingering, and played the exercises. Even though I was teaching him, I was a student myself. The rest of the week, Coulter would practice exercises and tunes.

Within a year Coulter was composing his own tunes – simple melodies that wandered all over the scale. I think it was the challenge of writing a secret message in this new code that attracted him. When he grew tired of practicing the same old tunes, he'd leaf through the books searching for something that sounded interesting. This is how he came upon Beethoven's "Hymn to Joy" and a theme from Mozart's "Magic Flute." Of course, these tunes were farther along in the book, so we'd have to learn new fingering and more complex rhythms. It was fun as well as challenging.

Occasionally I'd improvise a harmony line as Coulter played the melody. When he got interested in playing his own harmonies, I realized I couldn't just say, "Oh, play what you hear in your head." I had to explain intervals – thirds, fourths, fifths. We experimented, playing dozens of different intervals. Then, because a picture is worth a thousand words, I found myself writing harmonies on the music. Suddenly I realized that those black notes made sense after all.

Playing the recorder together stretches us both. As Coulter learns more about fingering from the books, he teaches me. (B-flat last week. How could I play the recorder for thirty years and never know a B-flat?) In turn, I share folk tunes with him. This past week he was playing a southern folk tune, "I Will Arise and Go to Jesus." It sounds a lot like "Shady Grove," so I played "Shady Grove" for him. We compared the tunes and got talking about how folk music comes about. When he wanted to learn the tune, though, he grew very frustrated with my attempts to have him play by ear.

"Please, Mom, can't you just write it down for me?" he asked.

"I'll need your help," I admitted. I played a line, and then we hummed it as I wrote the notes onto the paper.

Often I'd say, "What's this note?" and he'd answer, "That's a B, remember? It goes here," and he'd point to the line.

Another time, we wanted to transpose a folk song from one key into something that would fit the recorder's range. That required singing the song, then transposing it in my head and playing it, and finally writing it down. After a few measures we both realized that all we had to do was shift every note down by two. It sometimes seems like a lot of effort, but the result is music we can play together. It's a truly cooperative effort and one of the few activities that brings us together in harmony. Now Coulter wants to learn more so he can play along at our Tuesday night bluegrass jam sessions.

This year, Coulter's brother Toby (who is 6) is learning to play his own recorder. We're beginning with the finger-by-number method, and already he's playing "Twinkle, Twinkle" and "Oh Susannah." He loves the idea that he's playing real music, and often he and Coulter will present short concerts where they take turns to play their favorite tunes. Just tonight they talked about "getting Daddy a recorder for his birthday." Their father insists he's tone deaf and can't carry a tune in a covered pail. "No sweat, Daddy," they said. "We can teach you to play 'Hot Cross Buns' in 15 minutes!"

Homeschool Co-Op Studies Middle Ages

From Linda Butler (UT) and Terri Colborne:

Our families have been getting together twice a week to homeschool cooperatively. The Butlers have five children, ages 4, 6, 9, 13, and 15, and the Colbornes have two children, ages 11 and 13.

The most exciting and fun part of our "Together School" was last summer when we studied the Medieval Period. We spent about three months learning about the period and concluded with a wonderful Medieval feast. It began when the Salt Lake City Summer Reading Program featured a Medieval theme. We thought this would be a good opportunity, so, although we live about an hour's drive from Salt Lake City, we signed the kids up for the program and for several of the classes offered in conjunction with it.

We then found as many books about the Medieval Period as we could, ranging from simple picture books on castles or knights to an involved history of Heraldry. Each child read through whatever interested him or her. Linda typed out a four-page sheet of questions and things to think about. Much of the summer was spent reading books, watching videos we had gotten from the School District Media Library, and gathering information.

Jessica Butler being dressed in a suit of armor

The classes we attended in conjunction with the Salt Lake City library were interesting. They included medieval hair braiding, a fascinating chemistry demonstration given by a "wizard," and a writer's workshop with Elizabeth Winthrop, author of *Castle in the Attic*. The main class the kids attended was a week-long drama workshop where they were involved in acting out *The Wife of Bath's Tale* from Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. Since all seven of our children are involved in gymnastics, they were asked to choreograph a short pre-show exhibition. They made up a wonderful jester act, with juggling, pyramids and poses, tumbling, and acrobatics. The performance was at an open air Medieval Festival which hundreds of people attended.

After the Festival, we continued our studies with other activities, such as living "a day in the life of a peasant," including gathering wheat, grinding it, and making it into a very heavy and authentic Medieval bread. A big event was preparing a big Medieval feast after weeks of research.

A special treat for all of us was the opportunity to try on a real suit of armor. The entire suit weighed 68 pounds, and it was extremely ungainly and awkward to walk around in. When 13-year-old Rachel had it on, she fell backward onto the couch and it took three people to help her get back up on her feet! We really understood then how dangerous it was for a knight to be unseated.

After all these activities, the kids still had a lot they wanted to learn, so we continued to study the period for a couple of more months but at a much lessened intensity. The kids each chose several persons or events that interested them and wrote up a page on that person or event. They made an oral presentation to the other kids.

The three oldest children accompanied Linda to a history and fantasy symposium at Brigham Young University where they attended a panel discussion on the Medieval Period. They were able to participate freely with the college students. They understood the presentations and had the opportunity to ask questions and discuss the subject with students and professors.

After we finished studying the Medieval Period in the fall, we settled

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into meeting two days a week to do various activities. Everyone enjoyed meeting for the most part, but it was difficult finding things that would constantly involve seven children from ages 4 to 15. We did several projects together at home and went on some field trips; for example, when we were studying journalism, we visited a large newspaper and were able to meet with a reporter. After a few months, though, we felt that the older kids needed more time to study independently. It seems that some subjects lend themselves well to a group of kids of a wide range of ages, but others are best studied alone. We found that science, history, geography, and the arts can be adapted to interest everyone from preschool to high school, whereas math and reading were generally best studied within one's own family (although we did find that everyone enjoyed when we read aloud to the whole group).

Schooling together has been really fun and generally quite productive. It has been especially interesting as the Butler kids have spent very little time in any sort of school setting and the Colborne boys had been in school until three years ago. All the kids learned about dealing with different personalities and about how to work together to complete a project. Some things have come about by our careful planning; other great things have just happened!

Building, Computers, Chess

Kendra Crispin of Oregon writes:

When I was younger, I played with Lego Technics, and I really enjoyed building little houses and other structures. Legos come with instructions on how to build certain objects. When I first started building with Legos, I chose to start with one of the hardest objects. It must have taken me a week to two weeks, but I did it. It would have been easier had I started with the first building project and worked my way up, but I seem to like to do things the hard way sometimes.

Then, when my father bought a telescope, I built one out of cardboard. I've also built models of a house, a boat, a car, and other things which I now can't remember. I've always been interested in how things are built and what they are made of.

I'm also interested in computers. My father is a software engineer and has been working with computers since before I was born, so I've been around computers for my whole life. I want to work for my father's company when I'm older, so I'm going to work on a computer program that will teach me how to be a programmer.

Another interest of mine is chess. My father taught me how to play chess when I was young. He is a life master. I played for the local elementary school for two years. When I was 11 I played for the local middle school. This year I won first place in the state finals, and a few weeks ago I was elected vice-president of the Oregon Chess Federation.

Taught Herself Needle Arts

When Ada Fitzgerald-Cherry (NY) told us that she was interested in tatting, we wrote back to ask her what that was. Her explanation not only answers that question but also gives a glimpse of how young people can be inspired by others' example to teach themselves whatever new skills interest them:

I am 11 years old and I was born in Australia, where I lived until I was almost 8, when my family moved to the U.S. Ever since I was 5, I have been interested in the needle arts. At first my main interest was in sewing, but now I am exploring many subjects, some of which are felting, lace knitting, bobbin lace (which I tried with not-so-successful results) and tatting. Tatting is made up of little knots, called double stitches, worked in groups over a single thread, which is then pulled to draw the stitches into curved formations called rings and chains. Tatting is made using a small shuttle, around which the thread is wound. I learned it from a pamphlet my mother had bought in the hopes of learning how to tat herself. She never did. My motivation to learn it was a beautiful tatted snowflake I saw in a magazine. I taught myself and started on the snowflake pattern, but I was not as good as I had hoped, and work was going slowly, so I put it away. About

three months later, I found my tatting again. It was very poorly done, so I started again and this time it was much better, but I have not finished it yet, for I am working on another project that I have more interest in. Still, I like tatting because it's small enough for you to take it anywhere, you don't need any fancy equipment, and you can make beautiful things out of it.

Celebrating Autodidacts

In GWS #107, we interviewed Charles Haves, author of *Proving You're Qualified*. Haves publishes *Self-University Newsletter* (Autodidactic Press, PO Box 872749, Wasilla AK 99687; sample issue $6), and with the fall 1996 issue he sent a flyer saying that his press has sponsored "Self-University Week" for the past few years. Explaining the idea, Haves writes, "Traditional education in America has caused millions of people to conclude that education is something you 'finish.' The result is that people form deep convictions based on hearsay and borrowed opinion without feeling the need to fully reason the issues out for themselves. ... Answers to our most pressing problems are found in self-education ... ." To demonstrate the idea that adults, as well as children, can keep learning and don't need to go to school to do it, Haves's flyer lists "Fifty-Two Ways to Celebrate Self-University Week." Although the week itself was September 1-7, we're excerpting from the list because you can, of course, try these ideas at any time. Let us know what you try or what you've already been doing. It could be interesting to offer these ideas to older children and teenagers, too.

• Attend an open meeting or public forum each noon hour or evening for a week.

• Visit a library or bookstore every day and spend some time looking through sections you've never explored before. Make a list of the subjects or titles you find to be most interesting.

• Attend a lecture.

• Go to a foreign movie – or to a foreign country, if you can afford it.

• Reread a book you thought was difficult or "over your head" the first time you tried it.

• Form a roundtable discussion group to discuss books and ideas.

• Choose a prominent figure in history, science, politics, or the arts. Resolve to see how much you can find out about that person in books, movies, newspapers, and conversation with friends and associates over the next year. Study the person's original work and compare your opinions with the commentary of others.

• Write a letter to the editor of your local paper. See how clearly and succinctly you can make your point.

• Spend a week reading material with which you strongly disagree.

• Search a large computer database using your favorite subjects as key words.

• Spend some time asking the oldest (and hopefully the wisest) people you know what were the major lessons they learned from life.

• Volunteer eight hours of your time to a nonprofit organization.

• Spend a day or a week "media free" – no radio, TV, books, or magazines. Entertain nothing but your own thoughts.

• Take the time to master that piece of high-tech equipment that you dread the most. Read the instruction manual; call the engineers who designed it.

• Memorize a poem.

Thanks Anyway

The Autumn 1996 issue of the British newsletter Education Now *(113 Arundel Dr, Bramcote Hills, Nottingham NG9 3FQ) quotes from a July 1996 radio interview with the violinist Yehudi Menuhin:*

Question: You never went to school? Or you did for one day?

Menuhin: Not even one day; one morning ... When I came back from the morning, my mother asked what I had learnt. I said, "I really didn't learn anything. " I sat at the back of the class, and there was a little window high up on the wall, through which I could see branches. I hoped that a bird would alight. No bird alighted, but I kept hoping, and that's about all I could report. So my mother promptly said, "Well, we'll educate you at home." ◆

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Opportunities for Homeschoolers

Another Way to Play Team Sports

Pat Farenga writes:

At the National Homeschool Association conference in Beckett, MA on October 25th-27th, I learned from Peggy Daly-Mastemak (OH) that homeschoolers who want to play team sports but, for whatever reason, can't do so with local school teams can instead play through a national organization called the Amateur Athletic Union. Here is a quote from their brochure, which is available by calling 1-800-AAU-4USA:

"Founded in 1888, the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) is the largest not-for-profit, volunteer, multi-sport organization in the United States dedicated solely to the promotion and development of amateur sports and physical fitness programs. The AAU is the only sports organization in the country which provides a multi-sport program for all age groups.

"The AAU has focused itself on providing developmental and participatory programs to all Americans beginning at the grassroots level."

Peggy told me that the AAU is actively looking for homeschoolers to participate in their programs, which go well beyond the usual baseball, basketball, and football to include gymnastics, soccer, swimming, wrestling, taekwondo, karate, table tennis, and many other sports.

Cross-Country Bike Trip

Sarabeth Matilsky writes:

Are there any teens out there who want to embark on an adventure with me? I am a 17-year-old homeschooler, and in the summer of 1997 I am planning to ride my bicycle across the United States. I am looking for someone (or someones) to ride with me. I plan to leave the east coast in late April or early May and arrive in Eugene, Oregon by August 22 to go to Grace Llewellyn's second annual Not Back to School Camp (I went this past August and it was an incredible week!). I would like to decide the route with the person traveling with me, but I have tentatively decided to use the Trans America Bike Route (a series of maps put together by the Adventure Cycling Association). I plan to camp along the way and also stay with GWS host families, if possible.

There's a lot of work ahead, and I'm looking for someone who is willing to put a considerable amount of work into making it a great summer. I'd love to hear from anyone who is interested in biking and traveling and exploring and who is ready to take on this challenge with all of its certain misfortunes and amazing moments. Write Sarabeth Matilsky, 109 S. 4th Av, Highland Park NJ 08904-2622, or call 908-572-1049.

Adventure Courses

In GWS #108, Jill Boone wrote about how much her teenagers had enjoyed the Rightful Passage Adventure Courses for Homeschooled Teens. Tom and Debby Weister, who lead the courses, told us that their spring '97 schedule includes a canoe journey down the Green River in Utah from March 27th to April 9th (for ages 14 and up; cost is $750), a Leadership Training Course from April 13th to 17th (for ages 14 and up; cost is $225), and a Youth Challenge Course from April 18th to 24th (for ages 12 and up; cost is $300). Call or write for a brochure with further information: Rightful Passage, Rainbow's End Rd, Nevada City CA 95959; 916-265-5490.

Homeschoolers' Week at Colonial Williamsburg

Michelle Stevens of Virginia writes:

This past September was the first time that Colonial Williamsburg offered a week with special packages for homeschoolers. They had expected 300 people and got 1000! The morning consisted of a guided tour. Children were split into groups by age, and this helped a lot when it came to vocabulary used and pacing. We toured the village and had a chance to chat with the shopkeepers, who enjoyed our understanding of their need to stay in character. They commented that the homeschooled kids seemed to understand this better than the schooled kids.

We saw the jailhouse, learned how the jailer lived, why and how the gravevard was used, how they kept the prisoners. We talked with the milner, the wigmaker, the silversmith. After lunch we visited one of the plantation houses, and the groups rotated through the rooms, learning what would take place in each room: dancing and deportment in the parlor, handwriting on slates with the tutor in the dining room, discussions of chamber pots and bedwarmers in the bedroom, rolling dough and discussing with the cook, singing a spiritual in the garden with a slave woman.

While the children were doing this, the parents were invited into the side building for a discussion of study blocks that had been written for the Colonial Williamsburg experience (either before or after or instead of a trip there). I was astounded at the depth of detail that these study blocks achieved and how much fun they would be to do at home.

The next homeschoolers' week will be in February, and you can call 1-800-HISTORY for details. When we went in September, the package deal included one-day admission to the park, two nights in a motel on the grounds, two breakfasts, a gorgeous dinner on the grounds, and the guided tour, all for $253. Not per person, total! We are definitely planning to go again.

Last chance to order these great books!

In order to streamline our catalog and focus more on our own publications, we have to discontinue some beloved titles. If you've been meaning to get any of these books, now is the time! Special postage rates: add $3.50 for one book; $4.50 for two or more books. 2269 Mass. Ave., Cambridge MA 02140.

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History/Social Studies:

Diary of an Early American Boy, Eric Sloane. True story about a boy on a small farm in the early 1800s. $7.95.

Everyday Law for Young Citizens, Greta and Eric Lipson. Understand legal issues through stories. Ideal for homeschool group activity. $12.95.

Freedom's Children, Ellen Levine. Oral histories from people who were children during the Civil Rights Movement. $3.99.

Hey Mom, Can I Ride My Bike Across America?, John Seigel Boettner. See what Lorin Black says about this book on p. 17, in this issue! $14.95.

Wanted: Dead or Alive, Ann McGovern. A good introduction to Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad, for young children. $3.95.

Women and Work, Maureen Michelson. Short essays about 75 different working lives – including two essays by homeschooling teens. $14.95.

Fiction:

And Then a Harvest Feast, George Dennison. Good read-aloud book about city animals who decide to go live in the woods and plant a garden. $4.50.

Science:

Cars & How They Go, Joanna Cole. Great explanation for young kids. $4.95.

Messing around with Drinking Straw Construction, Bernie Zubrowski. How to make all sorts of realistic models with drinking straws. $9.95.

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Tom Brown's Field Guide to Nature Observation and Tracking, Tom Brown, Jr. Ideas for tracking animals in your neighborhood, or in the woods. $12.00.

Worms Eat My Garbage, Mary Appelhof. How to compost with worms. $9.95.

Math:

How to Lie with Statistics, Darrell Huff. Shows how statistics can misrepresent reality. $7.95.

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Fantasia: Easy Piano, Bill Boyd. Score for music from the movie. $9.95.

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How Writers Write, Pamela Lloyd. Well-known children's book authors talk about how they work. $13.95.

Writing from Home, ed. Susan Richman. Homeschooled students' poems, stories, essays. $8.95.

Jane, at age 5, worked on cookie sharing problems; she eventually wrote one as an infinite series! (see Ch. 2)

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1997 Directory of Families

About the GWS Directory

Here is our complete 1997 Directory. Entries or changes that arrived after our deadline (10/31/96) will be printed in GWS #115.

Long-time subscribers will notice a significant change in the way this year's Directory is arranged: within each state, families are listed **in zip code order,** rather than in alphabetical order as we've done in the past. This should make it much easier for you to find others in your area (or in another area, when you're planning a trip and looking to stay with GWS host families). We know that many people also use the Directory to look up the addresses of people who have written letters to GWS. This was easier when names were listed alphabetically, but we hope you'll accept this trade-off and be willing to skim through the names in each state to find the one you want (we've kept surnames in all capital letters to help with this). We're still using the same system, throughout GWS, for indicating whether someone is in the Directory: if a name in a GWS story is followed by a state abbreviation in parentheses (e.g. "Jane Goldstein (MA) writes..") that person *is* in the Directory. If the name is followed by the entire state name (e.g. "Jane Goldstein of Massachusetts writes..") then that person is *not* in the Directory. In future issues, we may experiment with putting the state abbreviation plus the zip code in parentheses, to make it that much easier for you to look someone up.

We are happy to forward mail to those whose addresses are not in the Directory. If you want us to forward the letter without reading it, address the outside of the envelope to the writer's name, c/o GWS. If you want us to read the letter and then forward it, please enclose another stamped envelope.

Our Directory is not a list of all subscribers, but only of those *who ask to be listed*, so that other GWS readers, or other interested people, may get in touch with them. If you would like to be included, please send the entry form on p. 41 or a 3x5 card (one family per card). Please take care to fill out all the information.

If a Directory listing is followed by a **(H)**, the family is willing to host GWS travelers who make advance arrangements in writing.

When you send us an address change for a subscription, please remind us if you are in the Directory, so we can change it here, too.

Please remember that we can't control how the Directory is used; if you receive unwanted mail as a result of being listed, just toss it out or recycle it.

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WI — Glenny WHITCOMB & Jerry FRANZEN (Julian/88, Miles/91) N4469 Hwy 55, Chilton 53014 (H) ••• Ann & John HIPPENSTEEL (William/84, Margrethe/87, Isaak/90) 2499 Lakeshore Rd, Grafton 53024 (H) ••• Brian & Elizabeth SPIELMAN (Gabrielle/81, Ben/84, Zach/85) 1265 Lois Av, Brookfield 53045 ••• Peggy & John BURNS (Johnny/80, Meggy/82, Patrick/86, Mary/90) 102 E White Oak Way, Mequon 53092 ••• Roy & Shelly UNDERHILL (Elyse/86, Wyatt/91) 14535 Club Dr, Elm Grove 53122 ••• Tiara MUHR (Crystal/83, Justin/88, Max/93) PO Box 994, Genoa City 53128 ••• Jeanne WELSCH & Robert RAINEK (Tegan/89, Teah/84) 1920 S Springdale Rd, New Berlin 53146 (H) ••• Ken & Sharon DUNFORD (Ashley/87, Chris/89) 8312 252 Av, Salem 53168 (H) ••• Laura & David HONAN (Skye/83, Nicholas/86, Benjamin/88, Eliza/90) 312 S Cottage St, Whitewater 53190 ••• Jeanne & Steven GRISETTI (Sarah/89) 2625 N 70th St, Wauwatosa 53213 ••• Susan ELIAS & Tom McCONNELL (April/81, Mark/84) 3145 N 54 St, Milwaukee 53216 (H) ••• Tom & Gretchen SPICER (Jacob/70, Seth/73, Jessica/74, Isaac/78, Esau/81, Moriah/87) Rt 1 Box 15, Avoca 53506 (H) ••• Camy MATTHAY & Paul HASTIL (Ben/87, Emma/91) 5708 Bell Brood Rd, Brooklyn 53521-9453 (H) ••• Craig & Helen KITZMAN (Jacob/81, Eva/84, Hannah/88) 455 London Rd, Deerfield 53531 ••• Marie BAKER & Dave JAMIESON (Sarah/79, Becky/84) RR 1 Box 65, Dodgeville 53533 (H) ••• Gene & Betty WALTON (Nick/76, Kate/80) 812 W Cramer, Fort Atkinson 53538 ••• Martha & Larry SHEA (Eleanor/88, Ruth/89, Caroline/92) 420 Augusta St, Janesville 53545 ••• Robert & Julie CREGO (Joanna/80) 5923 Century Av, Middleton 53562 ••• Carol & Martin STITT (Jason/85) 1768 Skyline Dr, Stoughton 53589 ••• Larry & Susan KASEMAN (Beth/72, Peter/75, Megan/81, Gretchen/78) 2545 Koshkonong Rd, Stoughton 53589 (H) ••• Kelly KOTEWA-VELDEY & Greg VELDEY (Gemma/86, Nolan/90) 4471 Windsor Rd, Windsor 53598 (H) ••• Suzanne ASKEY & David FOSS (Ben/87) 544 Elmside Blvd, Madison 53704 ••• Alison & David McKEE (Christian/78, Georgina/82) 5745 Bittersweet Pl, Madison 53705 (H) ••• Nick & Nancy CISAR (Katjusa/81) 1936 Commonwealth, Madison 53705 (H) ••• Melissa ALLEN & Jay OTTO (Benjamin/94) 710 Copeland St, Madison 53711 ••• Phyllis HASBROUCK & David SIMMONS (Nicholas/86, Nathan/90) 3113 View Rd, Madison 53711 (H) ••• Richard & Nancy PEIDELSTEIN (Alice/82, April/87) 614 Ridge St, Baraboo 53913 (H) ••• Karl & Melanie BURGI (Kyler/85, Ciara/87) E12678A Man Mound Rd, Baraboo 53913 (H) ••• Daryl & Valerie VAN OORT (Jessica/76, Martin/79, Nicholas/85) W12691 Hwy AS, Brandon 53919 (H) ••• Paul & Lois SOUKUP (Paula/72, Marlene/73, Lad/75, Cory/76, Jana/78, Aden & Ely/79) N1810 Hwy HH, Lyndon Station 53944 ••• John & Susan LAMPI (Ruth/78) 304 Rounsville St Apt B, Waupun 53963 (H) ••• Kathleen MELIN & John Sky STARKEY (Kodiak/84, Blaze/85, Lark June/88) 1540 200 St, St Croix Falls 54024 ••• Jill & Merritt BUSSIERE (Elena/83, Abram/85, Lilah/88) N5942 Meadow Rd, Kewaunee 54216 (H) ••• Janet & Ken BERGGREN (Charlie/87, Julia/90) RR 1 Box 118, Washington Island 54246 ••• Elizabeth BARR (Jordan/88) 309 S 11th Ave, Wausau 54401 (H) ••• Sharon & Frank DeSTEFANO (Nicholas/84, Danielle/86) 1007 W 6th St, Marshfield 54449 (H) ••• Clark & Sarajane SNYDER (Elizabeth/83, Becky/85) 14711 Range line Rd, Nekoosa 54457 (H) ••• Phil & Janice ZINDEL (Sarah/87) 5120 Wilsch Rd, Conover 54519 (H) ••• Fran & Dick SWIFT (Henry/85) 3039 S 27 St, La Crosse 54601 ••• Patti & Kevin VAN BUSKIRK (79, 82, 85) RR 1 Box 127, Westby 54667 (H) ••• Bryce BLACK & Kathleen PLUNKETT-BLACK (Lorin/79, Christopher/82, Geoffrey/87) Rt 2 Box 205, Arkansaw 54721 (H) ••• David & Ellen LIBERTO (Jonathan/84, Jesse/87, Anne/92) Rt 1 Box 194, Menomonie 54751 (H) ••• Jim & Jan ERDMAN (Martin/76, Will/78, Ryland/81) 1317 Meadow Hill Dr, Menomonie 54751 (H) ••• Pam OLSON & Bob WALSH (Katie/85, Hannah/87) Rt 1 Box 83, Stockholm 54769 (H) ••• David & Rachel GRAPENTINE (Devin/82, Eric/84, Will/87, Jacob/91) Rt 1 Box 449A, Maple 54854 ••• Megan & Mark PERRINE (Mika/78, Teal/81, Curt/84, Nori/89) Rt 1 Box 73A, Mason 54856 (H) ••• Mary & Marv BLOEDOW (Jason/84) N2723 Cty Hwy W, Weyerhauser 54895 (H) ••• Rebecca & Terry SCHMITZ (Michael/82, Christopher/86, Matthew/89) 1523 S Oakwood Rd, Oshkosh 54904 ••• Peter & Sarah GILBERT (Emily/85, Susannah/92) 1908 N Clark St, Appleton 54911 (H) ••• Annie & Richard KRUPNOW (Isaac/83, Sasha/87, Raven/91) N363 4th Av, Coloma 54930 (H) ••• Bruce CASNER & C. Lee DUCKERT (Dan/85, Ben/88) 229 Berkeley St, Neenah 54956 (H) ••• Gordon & Marjorie BERG (Joel/80, Rachel/82) 511 E Cecil St, Neenah 54956-3818 ••• Rene & Steve EMONS (Juline/83, Clayton/85, Caelin/87) RR 1 Box 328-2, Wautoma 54982 (H)

WY — Chris & Richard ANDERSON-SPRECHER (Andrew/80, Peter/83) UNSCHOOLERS OF WYOMING, 429 Hwy 230 #20, Laramie 82070 (H) ••• Breece & Sherryl FERGUSON (Alan/84, Elizabeth/86, Kelley/88, Denise/91) 1507 So Flat Rd, Worland 82401 ••• Randy & Cindy HOWDYSHELL (Joey/83, Keiry/85, Bronwyn/87, Mortah/89) 23 Dance Hall Rd, Lander 82520 (H) ••• Genie BOWERS & Paul STONE (Daniel/85, Susanna/89) PO Box 6072, Sheridan 82801 ••• Les & Mary PICKRELL (Andrea/80, Valerie/83, Michael/86, Christopher/89, Ashley/92) 28 Knode Rd, Sheridan 82801 (H) ••• Christine & Art DENTON (Skyler/87) PO Box 2420, Jackson Hole 83001

Canada:

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BC — Stephen & Carolyn FAWCETT (Maurice/83, Delrae/86) Box 1198, Kaslo V0G 1M0 (H) ••• Stephanie JUDY & Jerry WALKER (Tessa/82) Box 46, Slocan Park V0G 2E0 ••• Lynne THUNDERSTORM (Leaf/71, Raven/80, Fox/87) Box 58, Telegraph Creek V0J 2W0 (H) ••• Jan & Ron KIRKBY (Loren/80, Jesse/

83, Brady/86, Melody/89) RR1, Pender Island V0N 2M0 ••• Barbara KENNELLY & Ray CAMPBELL (Sebastian/88, Alexander/91) 5949 Jupiter Pl. RR #6, Sooke V0S 1N0 **(H)** ••• Tia LESCHKE & Rod NYBERG (Lara/87) 2023 Maple Av RR 3, Sooke V0S 1N0 ••• Marnie ANDREWS & Mike BULLOCK (Martin/87, Max/89) Box 505, Queen Charlotte City V0T 1S0 **(H)** ••• Terry & Alice MALOFF (Andrew/81, Steven/83, Jon Tyler/85, Kevin/87) 3108 5th Av, Castlegar V1N 2T8 ••• Myra CHUBCHIMAN & Thomas COLLIER (Kyla/77, Morgan/83, Alexander/85) 341 Hartley St, Quesnel V2J 1W5 ••• John & Marie ZETTL (Charity/82, Brayden/85, Grady/87) 2883 Killarney Dr, Prince George V2K 3J5 **(H)** ••• Nicole HAMAN & Robin DASS (Sasha/81, Mischa/85) 19677 21st Av, Langley V3A 4P4 **(H)** ••• Joan MILLER & Carl WHITNEY (Max/85, Emma/88) 253 Boyne St, New Westminster V3M 5J8 ••• Lisa & James LARGE (Kieran/87, Aidan/90, Kaela/92, Connor/95) 50954 O'Byrne Rd, Sardis V4Z 1B6 ••• Cynthia HAMILTON (Amy/89, Lydia/93) 18222 29A Av, Surrey V4P 1M6 **(H)** ••• Tina RAMSAY (Colton/92, Tanner/95) 25708 128 Av, Maple Ridge V4R 1C4 ••• Lisa & James LARGE (Kieran/87, Aidan/90, Kaela/92, baby/95) 50954 O'Byrne Rd, Chilliwack V4Z 1B6 **(H)** ••• Mischa & Diana SANDBERG (Sonja/83, Sabrina/86) 240 N Howard Ave, Burnaby V5B 1J7 **(H)** ••• Maureen BERGER & Joel HAWTHORNE (Virginia/89, Olivia/92) 1015 E 22 Av, Vancouver V5V 1W2 **(H)** ••• Lauren & Elspeth BANERD (Mika/87, Walker/89) #812-1483 Lamey's Mill Rd, Vancouver V6H 3Y7 ••• Pam MARTIN & Neil SEEDHOUSE (Willow/88, Robin/91, Forrest/94) 2633 York Av, Vancouver V6K 1E6 **(H)** ••• Lael WHITEHEAD & Richard BREDALE (Lauren/85, Marlise/88, Julia/91) 4453 W 6th, Vancouver V6R 1V2 **(H)** ••• Claudia BEAVEN & Philip TOLEIKIS (Lauren/84, Annise/88) Box 39009 Pt Grey RPO, Vancouver V6R 4P1 ••• Sandy KEANE & Michael MISKIN (Neal/85, Nicholas/89) 1163 Wellington Dr, N Vancouver V7R 1L3 **(H)** ••• Annette MacKAY (Lincoln/92, Grant/96) 212 W Windsor Rd, N Vancouver V7N 2N1 ••• Lynn & David MIDDLETON (Andrew/71, Jonathan/74, Benjamin/78, Katie/81) 2095 Flynn Pl, North Vancouver V7P 3H8 **(H)** ••• Sazjo STONE & John GILBERT (Sarkward/81, Sascha/83, Ohan/86, Thea/89) 159 Highwood Pl, Saltspring Island V8K 1R9 ••• Jan HUNT (Jason/81) 132 Bullock Creek Rd, Salt Spring Island V8K 2L3 **(H)** ••• Jack & Denise STURMWIND (Noam/82) 37 Beach Dr, Victoria V8S 2L3 ••• Kate & Tim COSTIN (Geoffrey/85, Ben/88, Vanessa/92) 652 Oliver St, Victoria V8S 4W3 ••• Alice WHITEHEAD (Lucie/82, Hazel/84) 202-930 Convent Pl, Victoria V8V 2Y8 ••• Sheila & Peter REDHEAD (Emily/87, Thomas/90) Cape Scott Lightstation, 21 Huron St, Victoria V8V 4V9 **(H)** ••• Sheila & Peter REDHEAD (Emily/87, Thomas/90) Cape Scott Lightstation, 21 Huron St, Victoria V8V 4W3 ••• Alice WHITEHEAD (Lucie/82, Hazel/84) 202-930 Convent Pl, Victoria V8V 2Y8 ••• Sheila & Peter REDHEAD (Emily/87, Thomas/90) Cape Scott Lightstation, 21 Huron St, Victoria V8V 4V9 **(H)** ••• Jerry & Janet ETZKORN (Jake/82, Justine/84) c/o Carmanah Lightstation, 21 Huron St, Victoria V8V 4V9 **(H)** ••• Eva TRNCZEK & Greg STRATEMEYER (Yana/85, Ely/87, Miguel/90) 4876 Marshall Rd, RR 3, Duncan V9L 2X1 **(H)** ••• Courtenay & Adrian CATO (Taja/89, Oceana/93) RR 7 Hillbank, Duncan V9L 4W4 ••• Joannia & Alex HADDAD (Nicole/78, Tacy/80) RR 7, Duncan V9L 4W4 ••• Bart & Aileen LaJEUNESSE (Zachary/83, Desiree/86) Site 6 C 35 RR 2, Nanaimo V9R 5K2

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SMM Educational Services. Box 1079, Sunland CA 91040 818-352-2310

U of Nebraska Independent Study High School. Continuing Ed Ctr Rm 269, Lincoln NE 68583

Weaver Curriculum. 2752 Scarborough, Riverside CA 92503 (Pre K-6th, 7-12th supplements)

For high school, college and grad courses, see PETERSON'S INDEPENDENT STUDY CATALOG, available from Holt Associates, 2269 Massachusetts Ave, Cambridge MA 02140 for $16.95 + $4 postage.

Helpful Private Schools

Private schools enrolling or helping homeschoolers in various ways (curricula, legal help, support):

Abbott Loop Christian Ctr. 2626 Abbott Rd, Anchorage AK 99507

Abbington Academy. Box 3303, Gibbs Av, Wareham MA 02571; 508-291-1229 (Cape Cod only)

Arivaca Community School. PO Box 24, Arivaca AZ 85601

Branford Grove School. PO Box 341172, Arleta CA 91334; 818-890-0350

Bay Shore School. PO Box 13038, Long Beach CA 90803; 310-434-3940

Cascade Canyon School. 459-3464 (San Anselmo, CA)

Cloniara Home Based Education Program, 1289 Jewett St, Ann Arbor MI 48104; 313-769-4515

Cooperative Learning Ctr. 454 Papaya St, Vista CA 92083; 619-726-3020

Dayspring Christian Academy. PO Box 60956, Palo Alto CA 94306

G.A.T.E. School. 1725 N Date #43, Mesa AZ 85201; 969-1821

Grassroots Free School. 2458 Grassroots Way, Tallahassee FL 32301; 904-656-3629

HCL Boston School. PO Box 2920, Big Bear City CA 92314; 909-585-7188

Horizon Academy, 21102 Pleasant Park Rd, Conifer CO 80433; 303-697-8158

Independence Private School, c/o Principal, M. Black, 45 Albert St North, Orilla ONT L3V 5R3, Canada

The Learning Community, 9085 Flintwood Way, Columbia MD 21045; 410-730-0073

The Learning Community, Inc. PO Box 5177, Herndon VA 22070

Little Piney School, RR 1 Box 20, Newburg MO 65550

Little Red Home School, 9669 E 123rd, Hastings MN 55033; 437-3849

Magic Meadow School, PO Box 29, N San Juan CA 95960

Meter Schools, PO Box 427, Rosharon TX 77583

Mount Vernon Academy, 184 Vine St, Murray UT 84107

Mt Carmel Academy, RD 1 Box 1737, Waterville VT 05492

Newbridge School, 3131 Olympic Blvd, Santa Monica CA 90404; 310-315-3056

Pilgrim Christian School, 3759 E 57th St, Maywood CA 90270; 213-585-3167

Pinewood School, 112 Road D, Pine CO 80470; 303-670-8180

Puget Sound Community School, 1715 112 Av NE, Bellevue WA 98004; 206-455-7617

Rocky Mountain High Academy, PO Box 418, Flora Vista NM 87415

Santa Fe Community School, PO Box 2241, Santa Fe NM 87501; 505-471-6928

Seedling, c/o Joy Reiter, 69 Sanderson Crescent, Richmond Hill Ontario L4C 5L5, Canada

Sidney Ledson School, 33 Overland Dr, Don Mills, Ont, Canada M3C 2C3; 416-447-5355

TEACH, 4350 Lakeland Ave, N Robbinsdale MN 55422

Thalassa!, 5917 Oak Av, Suite 176, Temple City CA 91780-2404; 818-287-8595

Upattinas School, 429 Greenridge Rd, Glenmoore PA 19343; 610-458-5138

Homeschooling Organizations

Some of these groups are statewide (look for the state name in the group's title as an indication) and are likely to have information about state laws or regulations, and may have conferences and packets of information for new homeschoolers. Other groups are local support groups that are likely to have meetings and activities. Both state and local groups may have newsletters. Try getting in touch with a state group even if it's far away from where you live; many state groups can refer you to families, or smaller support groups, in your immediate area.

State or Local Groups: (alphabetically by state):

AL Alabama Home Educators, PO Box 16091, Mobile 36116

East Lake UMC Academy, 1603 Great Pine Rd, Birmingham 35235 (acts as cover school)

AK Alaska Homeschoolers Assoc, PO Box 230923, Anchorage 99523-0973; 907-333-4840

Anchorage Home Spun Educators, 7421 Tangle CT, Anchorage 99504-3527

Sitka Home Educators, PO Box 1191, Sitka 99835

AZ Arizona Families for Home Education, PO Box 4661, Scottsdale 85261-4661; 800-929-3927

Bethany Home Educators, 2720 S Flint Cir, Mesa 85202

East Valley Educators (Phoenix Metro area) 602-983-5660

Home School Supplies, 1125 E Quick Draw Pl, Tucson 85749

Parents Assoc of Christian Home Schools, 6166 W Highland, Phoenix 85033

Phoenix Learning Alternatives Network, 8835 N 47th Pl, Phoenix 85028; 602-483-3381

SPICE, 10414 W Mulberry Dr, Avondale 85323; SusanT@AZTEC.asu.edu

AR Arkansas Christian Home Education Assoc, PO Box 501, Little Rock 72203

Coalition of Arkansas Parents, PO Box 192455, Little Rock 72219; 501-565-6583

CA California Homeschool Network, PO Box 44, Vineburg 95487-0044; 800-327-5339; email CHNMAIL@aol.com

Central Coast Homeschool Network, c/o Chris Whiting, 12 Marian Way, Pismo Beach 93449; 805-473-3212

Children and Community Network, c/o Lynne Knowles, 14556 Little Greenhorn Rd, Grass Valley 95945

Christian Home Educators of CA, PO Box 28643, Santa Ana 92799-8644; 714-537-5121

Esparto Homeschoolers, PO Box 305, Esparto 95627; 916-787-3613

Home School Assoc of CA (formerly Northern CA Homeschool Assoc), PO Box 2442, Atascadero 93423-2442; 707-765-5375 (newsletter, legal news, local support)

Homeschooling Cooperative of Sacramento, PO Box 217, Rio Linda 95673

Humboldt Homeschoolers, PO Box 2125, Trinidad 95570; 707-677-3290

Los Angeles Homeschoolers, 12810 Rubens Av, Los Angeles 90066; 310-821-9076

Mountain View Park Homeschoolers, 6603 Mammoth Av, Van Nuys 91405-4813

North Santa Clara Valley Homeschoolers, 795 Sheraton Dr, Sunnyvale 94087

Peninsula Homeschoolers, 4795 Lage Dr, San Jose 95130; 408-379-6835

Riverside Area Home Learners, c/o Gibson, 13171 Spur Branch Cir, Corona 91719; 909-245-0902

San Diego Home Educators, JoAnn, 619-560-8866

San Francisco Homeschoolers, c/o Anne Donjacour, 41 Eastwood Dr, San Francisco 94112-1225

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School of Home Learning Support Group, 1904 Flora Vista St, Needles 92363; 619-326-2107
Sonoma County Homeschoolers, 8600 Templeman Rd, Forestville 95436
South St Centre, Box 261, Boulder Creek 95006 (resource ctr for families)
South Valley Homeschoolers Assn, Box 961, San Martin 95046
SPICE, c/o PO Box 282, Wilton 95693
Tri-City Homeschoolers, 39195 Levi St, Newark 94560
W. San Fernando Valley Playgrp, c/o Brechi, 20555 Dumont St, Woodland Hills 91364; 818-888-2480
Whittier Homeschoolers, 7432 Duchess Dr, Whittier 90606; 310-695-7646
Wildflower Homeschoolers, 1557 Vancouver Way, Livermore 94550; 510-455-0465
Yosemite Area Homeschoolers, PO Box 74, Midpines 95345

CO Boulder County Home Educators, c/o Berg, 1495 Riverside, Boulder 80304; 303-449-5916
Colorado Home Educators Assoc, c/o Jolinda Lauderdale, 19871 E Prentice Ln, Aurora 80015; 303-441-9938
Colorado Home Schooling Network, 7490 W Apache, Sedalia 80135; 303-688-4136
Colorado Springs Homeschoolers, 2906 Marilyn Rd, Colorado Springs 80909; 719-598-8444
Fall River Homeschool, PO Box 3322, Idaho Springs 80452
Home Educators for Excellence of Durango, c/o Gring, 315 Timberline Dr, Durango 81301
Independent Network of Creative Homeschoolers, c/o Woodhouse, 724 Victor St, Aurora 80011; 303-340-3185; 303-751-6421
Mesa Verde Homeschoolers, PO Box 134, Mancos 81328; 970-882-7802
Northern Colorado Home School Assoc, c/o Trembacki, 2200 Vassar Av, Fort Collins 80525; 303-221-9749
Rocky Mtn Education Connection, c/o Valerie Berg, 1495 Riverside Av, Boulder 80304; 303-449-5916
Unschoolers Family Support Grp, 5315 Landgan St, Colorado Spgs 80919

CT Connecticut Home Educators Assoc, PO Box 250, Cobalt 06414; 203-781-8569
Unschoolers' Support, 22 Wildrose Av, Guilford 06437 203-458-7402

DE Delaware Home Education Assoc, Box 1003, Dover 19903
Tri State Homeschoolers Assoc, PO Box 7193, Newark 19714-7193

FL Florida Assoc for Schools at Home, 1000 Devil's Dip, Tallahassee 32308; 904-878-2793 (general statewide info)
Florida Parent-Educators Association, PO Box 1193, Venice 34284-1193; 813-492-6938 (primarily Christian group)
Homeschool Network, 548 N Lake Pleasant Rd, Apopka 32712-3904; 407-889-4632
Parkland Home Educators, 2111 Oakhurst Av, Winter Park 32792; 407-679-6890; 657-7560
Redlands Christian Home Educators, 9870 Martinique Dr, Cutler Ridge 33189; 305-233-2021
Tallahassee Homeschool Grp, Kathy Tripp, 904-575-7091

GA Atlanta Alternative Education Network, c/o Paymer, 1158 McConnell Dr, Decatur 30033; 404-636-6348
Cobb County Homeschoolers, 813 Wyntuck Dr, Kennesaw 30144
Free to Learn at Home, 4439 Lake Forest Dr, Oakwood 30566; 770-536-8077 (teen group)
Georgians for Freedom in Education, 7180 Cane Leaf Dr, Fairburn 30213; 770-463-1563
Harvest Home Educators, PO Box 1756, Buford 30518; 770-455-0449
North Side Atlanta Homeschoolers, c/o Jane Kelly, 4141 Wieuca, Atlanta 30342

HI Christian Homeschoolers of Hawaii, 910824 Oama St, Ewa Beach 96706; 689-6398
Hawaii Homeschool Assoc, PO Box 3476, Mililani 96789
Hawaii Island Home Educators, 968-8076 or 965-9002
The Tropical Homeschooler (newsletter), c/o Pinsky, 220 Waipalani Rd, Haiku, Maui 96708; 808-572-9289

IA Iowa Families for Christian Education, RR 3 Box 143, Missouri Valley 51555
Iowa Home Educators Assoc, PO Box 213, Des Moines 50301

ID Family Unschooling Network, 1809 N 7 St, Boise 83702; 208-345-2703
Home Educators of Idaho, 3618 Pine Hill Dr, Coeur d'Alene 83814; 208-667-2778

IL Evanston Home Educators, Nancy Guenther, 708-675-3632
HOUSE, c/o Anne Wasserman, 806 Oakton, Evanston 60202; 847-328-7129 (statewide)
Illinois Christian Home Educators, PO Box 261, Zion 60099

IN Families Learning Together, c/o Jill Whelan, 1714 E 51 St, Indianapolis 46205; 317-255-9298
Indiana Assoc of Home Educators, 1000 N Madison #82, Greenwood 46142; 317-638-9633
Kentuckiana Home Educators (KY & IN area), see KY, below
LEARN, 9577 E State Rd 45, Unionville 47468; 812-336-8028 (Bloomington area)
Wabash Valley Homeschool Assoc, c/o Palmer, 2515 E Quinn Av, Terre Haute 47805; 812-466-9467

KS: Central Kansas Homeschoolers, c/o Susan Peach, Rt 1 Box 28A, Rush Center 67575
Christian Home Educators Confederation of Kansas, PO Box 3564, Shawnee Mission 66203
Lawrence Area Unaffiliated Grp of Homeschoolers, c/o Mechenel, RR 1 Box 496, Perry 66073
Teaching Parents Assoc, PO Box 3968, Wichita 67201; 316-945-0810

KY Kentuckiana Home Educators, 6806 Timber Ridge Ct, Prospect 40059; 502-228-6906 (KY & IN area)
Kentucky Home Education Assoc, PO Box 81, Winchester 40392-0081
Kentucky Independent Learners Network, PO Box 275, Somerset 42502; 606-678-2527
Madison County Homeschool Assoc, 239 Reeves Rd, Richmond 40475

LA Home Educators Network, 59126 Thompson Rd, Slidell 70460
Louisiana Citizens for Home Education, 3404 Van Buren, Baker 70714; 504-775-5472
Southwest Acadiana Homeschoolers, 507 S. Arenas, Rayne 70578; 318-334-2812
Wild Azalea Unschoolers, 6055 General Meyer Av, New Orleans 70131 504-392-5647

ME Maine Homeschool Association, PO Box 421, Topsham 04086; 1-800-520-0577
Peninsula Area Homeschooling Assoc, PO Box 235, Deer Isle 04627
Sebago Lake Homeschoolers Support Grp, RR 2 Box 54, Sebago Lake 04075; 207-642-4368
Southern Maine Home Education Support Network, 76 Beech Ridge Rd, Scarborough 04074; 207-883-9621
Western Washington Cty Homeschoolers, RFD 1 Box 93, Harrington 04643

MD Glen Burnie Home School Support Grp, c/o Whetzel, 6514 Dolphin Ct, Glen Burnie 21061
Maryland Home Education Assoc, 9085 Flamepool Way, Columbia 21045; 410-730-0073
Maryland-Pennsylvania Home Educators, see under Pennsylvania

MA ALOHA (A Loosely Organized Homeschool Assoc), c/o Hazelton, 24A Calamint Rd N, Princeton 01541; 508-464-7794
Apple Country Homeschooling Assoc, PO Box 246, Harvard 01451; 508-456-8515
Berkshire Homeschoolers Grp, 217 Old State Rd, Berkshire 01224; 413-443-1770
Cape Ann Homeschoolers, 8 McKays Dr, Rockport 01966; 508-546-7744
Franklin Co Families for Home Ed, 413-625-6566
Greater Boston Home Educators, 617-246-2059 (Wakefield)
Homeschoolers of Mass. Education Club (Boston area), contact Phoebe Wells, 617-876-7273
Homeschooling Together (Arlington-Belmont area), Sophia Savigh 617-641-8515
Lowell area Group, Debbie Finch, 508-458-3896
Mass. Home Educators, 22 Garland St, Lynn 01902; 617-599-6267
Mass. Home Learning Assoc, PO Box 1558 Marstons Mills 02648, W. Mass. contact Loretta Heuer 508-429-1436; E. Mass. contact Kathy Smith 508-249-9056
Newburyport Area Homeschool Network, 32 Columbus Av, Newburyport 01950; 508-462-5680
North Shore Support Grp, 508-468-4663 or 508-658-8970
Plymouth PALS, Eileen Fortunato 508-747-0297
Southeastern Mass. Homeschool Assoc, PO Box 4336, Fall River 02723-0403; 508-672-0248
Wakefield area Group, Lucia Jenkins 617-246-2059

MI Bay City Homeschooling Support Grp, 517-684-6130
Benzie Home Educators, PO Box 208, Benzonia 49616
Families Learning and Schooling at Home (FLASH), 21671 B Drive N, Marshall 45068; 616-781-1069
Heritage Home Educators, 2122 Houser Rd, Holly 48442
Home Educators' Circle, 1280 S John Hix, Westland 48186; 313-326-5406
Information Network for Christian Homes, 4150 Ambrose NE, Grand Rapids 49505
Learning Tree Resource Center, PO Box 69, Atlantic Mine 49905; 906-482-6393
Older Homeschoolers Group, c/o Linn Family, 9120 Dwight Dr, Detroit 48214
OWL (Oakland, Washtenaw, Livingston) Homeschool Support Group, c/o Debra Cohn, 6036 Seven Mile, S Lyon 48178; 810-437-8931
Sunnyridge Alternative Learning Ctr, HCO 1 Box 134, Pelkie 49958

MN Families Nurturing Lifelong Learners, 2452 Southcrest Av, Maplewood 55119
Fargo-Moorehead Homeschool Assoc, 1909-8th St S, Moorehead 56560
Home-Based Educators Accrediting Assoc, Rt 1 Box 381, Cambridge 55008
Minnesota Homeschoolers Alliance, PO Box 23072, Richfield 55423; 612-399-1748 (statewide)

MS Home Educators of Central Mississippi, c/o McDonald, 109 W Willow Ct, Ridgeland 39157; 601-366-9218
Oxford Homeschool Network, 21 CR 3024, Oxford 38655

MO Families for Home Education, 400 E High Pt Ln, Columbia 65203; 816-826-9302
Kansas City Homeschoolers & Unschoolers, 4112 Genesee, Kansas City 64111 816-931-7089
Ozark Lore Society, c/o Eisenmann, HC 73 Box 160, Drury 65638; 417-679-3391 (Ozark area grp)
Springfield Area Homeschoolers, Rt 1 Box 193, Fair Grove 65648
St. Louis Homeschooling Network, c/o Steinbart, 2612 Towne Oak Dr, St Louis 63129

MT The Grapevine (statewide newsletter), PO Box 3228, Missoula 59806; 406-542-8721
Montana Coalition of Home Educators, PO Box 43, Gallatin Gateway 59730; 406-587-6163

NE LEARN, 7741 E Avon Ln, Lincoln 68505; 402-488-7741
Nebraska Indep. Homeschoolers Network, 8010 Lillibridge St, Lincoln 68506
Omaha Project for Education and Nurturing, 9218 Leavenworth, Omaha 68114
Prairie Christian Home Schools, Rt 3 Box 73, Ord 68862

NV Home Schools United/Vegas Valley, PO Box 26811, Las Vegas 89126; 702-870-9566
Parent Activists Committed to Education, PO Box 13587, Las Vegas 89112;

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702-457-1509

NH New Hampshire Alliance for Home Education, 16 Winter Circle, Manchester 03103; 603-424-4060

New Hampshire Home School Coalition, PO Box 2224, Concord 03302; 603-539-7233

Orchard School Homeschooling Support Grp. Kathleen Burch, HC 63 Box 52, Alstead 03602; 603-835-6086

Support Alternative Family Education, PO Box 15, Plaistow 03865; 603-382-3839

NJ Homeschoolers of South Jersey, Rt 2 Burnt House Rd, Vincentown 08088

Jersey Shore Christian Homeschoolers Assoc, 65 Middlesex Rd, Matawan 07747-3030

NJ Family Schools Assoc, RD 3 Box 208, Washington 07882

North Jersey Home Schoolers Assoc, 44 Oak St, Hillsdale 07642; 201-666-6025

Sussex County Home Education Organization, 875-6178

The Tutor, 1239 Whitaker Av, Millville 08332; 609-327-1224

Unschoolers Network, 2 Smith St, Farmingdale 07727; 908-938-2473 (statewide)

Unschooling Fams. Support Grp of Central NJ, RD 1 Box 713, Jobston 08041; 609-723-1524

NM Glorieta Family Educators, Star Rt 1 Box 404, Glorieta 87535

Home Educators of Santa Fe, 21 Frasco Rd, Santa Fe 87505; 505-466-4462

Homeschooling PACT, c/o Senn, Box 961, Portales 88130; 505-359-1618

New Mexico Family Educators, PO Box 92276, Albuquerque 87199-2276; 505-889-9775

NM Christian Home Educators, 5749 Paradise Blvd NW, Albuquerque 87114; 505-897-1772

Unschoolers of Albuquerque, 8116 Princess Jeanne NE, Albuquerque 87110; 505-299-2476

NY Albany Area Homeschoolers, 46 Pershing Dr, Scotia 12302; 518-346-3413

Families for Home Education, 3219 Coulter Rd, Cazenovia 13035; 315-655-2574

Fingerlakes Unschoolers Network, 201 Elm St, Ithaca 14850; 607-273-6257

Homeschoolers Network of the Mid-Hudson Valley, RD 2 Box 211F, Ski Run Rd, Bloomingburg NY 12721; 914-733-1002

Long Island Homeschoolers Assoc, 4 Seville Pl, Massapequa Park 11762; 516-795-5554

New York City Home Educators Alliance, PO Box 1214 Murray Hill Station, NY 10156; 212-505-9884

NY State Home Education News, PO Box 59, E Chatham 12060; 518-392-6900 (legal news)

OASIS (Oneonta area Sharing in Schooling), PO Box 48, Gilbertsville 13776; 607-783-2271

Rochester Area Homeschoolers Assoc, 275 Yarmouth Rd, Rochester 14610; 716-271-0845

Tri-County Homeschoolers, c/o Hofer, PO Box 190, Ossining NY 10562; 914-941-5607

NC Families Learning Together, c/o Powell, 218 Dogwood Dr, Washington 27889; JPowell@skantech.com (statewide)

The Home Education Association, 300 Brown Cir, Rolesville 27571; 919-554-1563

North Carolinians for Home Education, 419 N Boylan Av, Raleigh 27603-1211; 919-834-NCHE

ND North Dakota Home School Assoc, PO Box 486, Mandan 58554; 701-223-4080

OH Assoc of Ohio Homeschoolers, 3636 Paris Blvd, Westerville 43081

Christian Home Educators of Ohio, PO Box 1224, Kent 44240

Christian Parents Assoc, 310 Bluebonnet Dr, Findlay 45840 (local only)

Growing Together, c/o Nancy McKibben 1676 Trendril Ct, Columbus 43229

Heights Homeschoolers, 2065 Halsey, S Euclid 44118

Home Education League of Parents, 3905 Herr Rd, Sylvania 43560; 419-843-7179 (statewide group)

Home Education Resource Organization, 4 Erie St, Norwalk 44857; 419-668-6480

Home School Network of Greater Cincinnati, 642 Romohr Acres, Cincinnati 45244; 732-6355

Ohio Home Educators Network, PO Box 23054, Chagrin Falls 44023-0054; 216-786-8001 or 330-274-0542

Parents Enriching Alt. Childhood Educ, 9520 Co Rd 10-2, Delta 43515; 337-4810

OK Cornerstone (Tulsa area grp), PO Box 459, Sperry 74073; 918-425-4162

Home Educators Resource Org. of OK, c/o Leslie Moyer, 4401 Quail Run Av, Skiatook 74070-4024; 918-396-0108 (statewide grp supporting unschooling) and HERO Resource Center, c/o Lucy Clark, 916 82 Av, Norman 73071

OK Central Home Educators Consociation, PO Box 270601, OKC 73137

Oklahoma Christian Home Educators Assoc, PO Box 471363, Tulsa 74147

OR The Learning Connection, PO Box 1091 #196, Grants Pass 97526; 541-476-5686; janemj.tlc@juno.com

Mid-Valley Secular Homeschoolers (Salem area), 503-362-1203

Oregon Home Education Network, 4470 SW Hall Blvd #286, Beaverton 97005; 503-321-5166

Parents Education Assoc, PO Box 1482, Beaverton 97075; 503-645-3709

Portland Area Tri-County Homeschoolers, PO Box 82415, Portland 97282; 503-641-7813

Willamette Homeschoolers, 245 W 27th Av, Eugene 97405

PA Chester County Homeschoolers, 226 Llandoverry, Exton 19341

Diversity United in Homeschooling, 233 Bluebell Av, Langhorne 19047; 215-741-9389

Endless Mountains Homeschoolers (N Central PA), c/o Kellogg, RD 3 Box 80, Columbia Cross Rds 16914; 717-549-8179

Maryland Pennsylvania Home Educators, PO Box 67, Shrewsbury 17361; 717-993-3603

Pennsylvania Home Education Network, 285 Allegheny St, Meadville 16335; 412-561-5288

Pennsylvania Homeschoolers, RD 2 Box 117, Kittanning 16201; 412-783-6512

People Always Learning Something (PALS), 4645 Cook Av, Pittsburgh 15236; 412-885-0132

RI Parent Educators of RI, PO Box 782, Glendale 02826

Rhode Island Guild of Home Teachers (Home Spun News), Box 11, Hope RI 02831; 401-821-7700

SC Carolina SuperSchoolers, 777 Hillview St, Spartanburg 29302

Home Organization of Parent Educators, c/o Griesemer, 1697 Dotterer's Run, Charleston 29414; 763-7833

Homeschool Assoc of South Carolina, 1679 Memorial Park Rd Suite 179, Lancaster 29720

South Carolina Association of Independent Home Schools, PO Box 2104, Irmo 29063

South Carolina Home Educators Assoc, PO Box 612, Lexington 28071-0612; 803-951-8960

South Carolina Homeschool Alliance, 1679 Memorial Park Rd, Suite 179, Lancaster 29720; email ConnectSC@aol.com

SD South Dakota Home School Assoc, PO Box 882, Sioux Falls 57101; 605-338-9689

TN Home Education Assoc of Tenn (HEAT), 3677 Richbriar Ct, Nashville 37211

Tennessee Homeschooling Families, 214 Park Ln, Oliver Springs 37840; 615-435-4375

TX: Austin Area Homeschoolers, 510 Park Blvd, Austin 78751

Houston Alternative Education Alliance, 12811 Ivy Forest Dr, Cypress 77429

Metroplex Middle of the Road (Home) Educators, 1702 S Hwy 121, Suite 607-110, Lewisville 75067; 214-724-1026

North Texas Self-Educators, c/o Jordan, 150 Forest Ln, Double Oak Lewisville 75067; 817-430-4835

Texas Advocates for Freedom in Education (TAFFIE), 13635 Greenridge St, Sugar Land 77478; 713-242-7994

Texas Homeschool Coalition, 806-797-4927

UT: FCLA Utah Spice Group, 1510 W 500 N, Provo 84601; 801-377-4728

Salt Lake Home Educators, 801-269-1997

Utah Home Education Association, PO Box 570218, Sigurd 84657-0218; 801-535-1533 or 801-342-4027

VT Christian Home Educators of VT, 802-476-9921

Resource Center for Homeschooling, c/o Deb Shell, RR 2 Box 289C, Polly Hubbard Rd, St Albans 05478; 802-524-9645

Vermont Homeschoolers Assoc, RD 2 Box 4440, Bristol 05443; 802-453-5460

Windham County Homeschoolers, RR 2 Box 1332, Putney 05346

VA ALOFT (Alt. Learning Options for Free Thinkers), 2120 Wiggington Rd, Lynchburg 24502

Blue Ridge Area Network for Congenial Homeschooling, c/o Ann Rudwell, 255 Ipswich Pl, Charlottesville 22901

Community of Independent Learners, PO Box 16029, Alexandria 22302; 703-998-9626

Home Educators Network, 3320 Waverly Dr, Fredericksburg 22401

Home Instruction Support Group, 217 Willow Terr, Sterling 22170

LEARN/No. VA Homeschoolers, c/o Vernon, 1111 Waynewood Blvd, Alexandria 22308

Northern VA/DC Metro group, c/o Compton, 12310 Streamvale Cir, Herndon 22070; 703-742-8597

Richmond Educational Alternatives for Children at Home, 3019 Putney Rd, Richmond 23228

VA Home Education Assoc, Rt 1 Box 370, Gordonsville 22942; 540-832-3578; email vhea@virginia.edu

WA Clark Co. Home Educators, 28823 NW Main St, Ridgefield 98642; 206-887-3042

Families Learning Together, Box 10 Tiger Star, Rt, Colville 99114

Family Academy, 146 SW 153rd #290, Seattle 98166

Family Learning Organization, PO Box 7247, Spokane 99207; 509-467-2552 (also statewide)

Homeschoolers' Support Assoc, PO Box 413, Maple Valley 98038; 206-432-9805

Palouse Home Learning Alternatives, SE 405 Hill, Pullman 99163

Rainbow Way Playgroup, c/o Bystrom, 8632 Inverness Dr NE, Seattle 98115-3936; 206-522-4313

Seattle Homeschool Grp, 6549 42 Av NE, Seattle 98115; 206-524-6704

Teaching Parents Assoc, 16427 28th Dr SE, Bothell 98012; 206-483-6642

Washington Homeschool Organization, 18130 Midvale Av N, Seattle 98133; 206-298-8942

Whatcom Homeschool Assoc, 3851 Britton Rd, Bellingham 98226

WV Christian Home Educators of West VA, PO Box 266, Glenville 26351; 304-462-8296

Marion Cty Home Education Organization, RR 6 Box 336, Fairmont 26554

West VA Home Educators Assoc, PO Box 3707, Charleston 25337-3707; 1-800-736-9843

WI Families in Schools at Home (FISH), 4639 Conestoga Trail, Cottage Grove 53527

HOME (Madison Chapter), 5745 Bittersweet Pl, Madison 53705; 608-238-3302

Unschooling Families, 1908 N. Clark St, Appleton 54911; 414-735-9832

Wisconsin Parents Assoc, PO Box 2502, Madison 53701

WY Unschoolers of Wyoming, 429 Hwy 230, #20, Laramie 82070

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National or General Homeschool Groups:

American Homeschool Assoc. PO Box 1125, Republic WA 99166-1125, 509-486-2477 (for homeschooling organizations)
Holt Associates/Growing Without Schooling. 2269 Massachusetts Ave, Cambridge MA 02140, 617-864-3100
Home Education Magazine/Home Education Press. PO Box 1083, Tonasket WA 98855, 509-486-1351
Home School Legal Defense Assoc. PO Box 159, Paeonian Springs VA 22129, 540-338-5600
Home School Researcher, see Nat'l Home Education Research Institute
Homeschool Support Network/Home Educator's Family Times, PO Box 1056, Gray ME 04039, 207-657-2800
Nat'l Center for Home Education. PO Box 200, Paeonian Spgs VA 22129, 540-338-7600
Nat'l Home Education Research Institute. Western Baptist College, 5000 Deer Park Dr SE, Salem OR 97301-9392, 503-375-7019
Nat'l Homeschool Association. PO Box 290, Hartland MI 48353, 513-772-9580 (voice mail)
Nat'l Homeschool Service. PO Box 167, Rodeo NM 88056, 505-557-2250
The Teaching Home. PO Box 20219, Portland OR 97220-0219

Special-Interest Homeschooling Groups:

At Our Own Pace, c/o Jean Kulczyk, 102 Willow Dr, Waukegan IL 60087, 847-662-5432 (newsletter for homeschooling families with special needs)
The Drinking Gourd (homeschoolers of color), PO Box 2557, Redmond WA 98073, 206-836-0336 or 1-800-TDG-5487
Home Educators Computer Users Group. 26824 Howard Chapel Dr, Damascus MD 20872-1247, 301-253-5467
Home School Assoc for Christian Science Families. 445 Airport Rd, Tioga TX 76271
Homeschoolers for Peace & Justice. PO Box 74, Mulpitas CA 95345
Homeschoolers Travel Network. NHA, 10755 Hibner Rd, Hartland MI 48353
Homeschooling Unitarian Universalists and Humanists, 3135 Lakeland Dr, Nashville TN 37214-3312, 615-889-4938
Islamic Homeschool Assoc of North America. 1312 Plymouth Ct, Raleigh NC 27610
Jewish Home Educator's Network, c/o M. Lowe, 1295 Marshall Dr SE, Salem OR 97302, 503-362-1203, email marilyn.lowe@chemek.com
Nat'l Assoc of Catholic Home Educators. PO Box 420225, San Diego CA 92142
Nat'l Assoc of Mormon Home Educators. 2770 S 1000 West, Perry UT 84302
Nat'l Challenged Homeschoolers Assoc (NATHHAN). 5383 Alpine Rd SE, Olalla WA 98359, 206-857-4257
Nat'l Handicapped Homeschoolers Assoc. 814 Shavertown Rd, Boothwyn PA 19061, 215-459-2035
Simon of Cyrene Assoc (African-American Homeschoolers of Christian Faith), PO Box 26357, Rochester NY 14626

Homeschool Groups Outside of U.S.

Canada:

Alberta Home Education Assoc, c/o Aine Stasiewich, Box 3451, Leduc AB T9E 6M2
Calgary Home Eds Encouragement & Resource Society. RR 6, Calgary AB T2M 4L5
Canadian Alliance of Homeschoolers. 272 Hwy #5, RR 1, St George ON N0E 1N0, 519-448-4001
Canadian Home Educators Assoc of BC. 4684 Darin Ct, Kelowna BC V1W 2B3, 604-764-7462
Community Connections, BJ Smith, 101 Point Dr NW, Calgary AB T3B 5C8
Cowichan Valley Homelearners Support Grp. RR 7, Duncan BC V9L 4W4
Cowichan Valley Christian Homelearners Support Grp. 1050 Marchmont Rd, Duncan BC V9L 2M7
Education Advisory. 2267 Kings Ave. W Vancouver BC V7V 2C1
Greater Vancouver Home Learners Support Grp. 604-228-1939; 604-298-6710
Home Education News. Box 39009 Pt Grey RPO, Vancouver BC V6R 4P1
Home Learning Resource Centre. Box 61, Quathiaski BC V0P 1N0
Home School Legal Defense Assoc of Canada, PO Box 42009, Millbourne PO, Edmonton AB T6K 4C4, 403-986-1566
Homebased Learning Society of Alberta. 8754 Connors Rd, Edmonton AB T6C 4B6, 988-4652
Homeschoolers Assoc of Northern Alberta. 6311 14 Av, Edmonton AB T6L 1Y1
Manitoba Assoc for Schooling at Home. 89 Edkar Cres, Winnipeg MB R2G 3H8
Montreal Homeschoolers' Support Grp. 5241 Jacques Gremer, Montreal PQ H3W 2G8
New Bruns. Assoc of Christian Homeschoolers. RR 1 Site 11 Box 1, Hillsborough NB E0A 1X0, 506-734-2863
Nova Scotia Support Grp, c/o Laura Uhlman RR 1, Pleasantville NS B0R 1G0
Ontario Federation of Teaching Parents, 83 Fife Rd, Guelph ON N1H 6X9, 519-763-1150
Ontario Homeschoolers. Box 19, Gilford, ON L0L 1R0, 705-456-3186
Orilla Homeschoolers' Support Grp. 45 Albert St North, Orilla ON L3V 5K3
Quebec Homeschooling Advisory. CP 1278, 1002 Rosemarie, Val David PQ J0T 2N0
Rideau Valley Home Educators Assoc, c/o Dubuc, 1144 Byron Av, Ottawa ON K2B 6T4, 613-729-0117
Salt Spring Unschoolers Network. 132 Bullock Creek Rd, Salt Spring Island BC V8K 2L3
Saskatchewan Home Based Educators. 116A Idylwyld Dr. N, suite 13, Saskatoon SK S7L 0Y7
Tri-City Home Learners Network, 604-464-1056 (Port Coquitlan, BC)
Victoria Home Learning Network. 106-290 Regina, Victoria, BC V8Z 6S6
Villa Villekula Homeschool Resource Grp. 1250 Gladstone Av, Windsor ON N8X 3H3, 519-254-3593
Wondertree Education Society, Box 38083, Vancouver BC V5Z 4L9, 604-739-5943
Yukon Home Educators' Society. Box 4993, Whitehorse YT Y1A 4S2

Australia:

Accelerated Christian Education. PO Box 10, Strathpine, Qld., 07 205 7503
Alternative Education Resource Group, PO Box 71, Chirnside Park VIC 3116
Brisbane Homeschooling Group. Lot 2, Caboolture River Rd, Upper Caboolture 4510
Canberra Home Education Network, 23 Bardolph St, Bonython, ACT 2905, 9
Homeschoolers Australia Pty Ltd. PO Box 420, Kellyville 2153, NSW Australia
NSW Central Coast Homeschool Grp. RMB 6346, MacDonalds Rd, Lisarow NSW 2250, Australia
Sunshine Coast Homeschooling Grp. #40 Browns Rd, Belli Park via Edmundi, 4562 Queensland
Yarra Valley Homeschoolers, 9 Salisbury St, Warburton

England:

Education Otherwise. PO Box 7420, London N9 9SG; (tel.) 0891 518303 (has local contacts throughout England and the U.K.)

France:

Les Enfants D'Abord. 18 Grde Rue, Valence 26000, France

Japan:

Otherwise Japan, PO Box Kugayama, Suginami-ku, Tokyo, Japan; email JAB02521@niftyserve.or.jp

Netherlands:

Netherlands Homeschoolers, Raadhuislaan 31, 2131 Hoofddoorp, The Netherlands

New Zealand:

Home Educators' Network of Aotearoa, PO Box 41172, St. Lukes, Auckland (quarterly newsletter)
Homeschooling Federation of New Zealand. 5 Thanet Av, Mt Albert, Auckland, New Zealand

Spain:

Aprender Sin Escuela, c/o Szil Norberg, Apartado 45, Alfaz del Pi 03580, Alicante, Spain

(for individual family listings in several other countries not listed here, see Directory of Families)

Other Organizations:

These educational, child-raising, or self-reliance organizations are good sources of help and allies. Again, a SASE is appreciated.
Alliance for Parental Involvement in Education. PO Box 59, E Chatham NY 12060-0059, 518-392-6900 (deals with public, private, and home schools)
Alternative Education Resource Organization. 417 Roslyn Rd, Roslyn Hghts NY 11577, 516-621-2195
EVAN-G, 977 Keeler Ave, Berkeley CA 94708 (against corporal punishment)
La Leche League International. 1400 N Meacham Rd, PO Box 4079, Schaumberg IL 60168-4079, 1-800-LA LECHE
Liedloff Continuum Network, PO Box 1634, Sausalito CA 94966 (people interested in *The Continuum Concept*)
Nat'l Assoc for the Legal Support of Alt. Schools. PO Box 2823, Santa Fe NM 87501, 505-471-6928
National Center for Fair and Open Testing (FairTest), 342 Broadway, Cambridge MA 02139, 617-864-4810
Nat'l Coalition Of Alt. Community Schools, PO Box 15036, Santa Fe NM 87506, 505-474-4312

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If you are using this Directory and it is after February 1997, remember that addresses (especially of state and local groups) change often. Look in later issues of GWS (#115 on) for additions and changes to the Directory of Families and the Directory of Organizations.

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Writing to GWS

Please: (1) Put separate items of business (book orders, directory entries, letters to GWS, etc.) on separate pieces of paper. This helps us get them to the right people more quickly. (2) Put your name and address at the top of each letter. (3) If you're writing to a specific person, write "GWS" or "Holt Associates" on the envelope in addition to the individual's name.

How to write letters for publication in GWS:

1. Handwrite, type, or dictate your thoughts and send them in on paper, on a cassette tape, or on a 3.5" disc that can be read by a Macintosh (send the hard copy too).

2. There is no #2! We have no formal submission procedures, so rule #1 is all you need. Do tell us whether it's OK to use your name with the story (it's fine to be anonymous instead) and do bear in mind that we edit letters for space and clarity and that we often have much more great stuff than room to print it in a given issue, so it can take a while before something gets in.

The best way to get a sense of what kind of writing gets published in GWS is to look through a few issues. In general, we prefer writing that is in the first- or third-person ("I did this" or "She did that") rather than in the instructional or proscriptive second-person ("You should do this..."). We like to hear about what people did or tried, what did or didn't work, what they've observed or concluded or wondered as a result. GWS stories focus on how children learn, particularly how they learn outside of school settings, and how adults learn, particularly how they tried something new, figured something out, or made their way without school credentials. We are always interested in stories about how homeschoolers meet and deal with common issues – negotiating with a school district, pursuing a particular interest, learning to trust oneself – to name just a few.

We're always interested in responses to writing that has been published in the past, and GWS is often an ongoing conversation among its readers. Because there isn't much time between the day you get an issue of the magazine and the day the next issue goes to press, responses can't always be run right away, but we do try.

Most of the time, readers don't need a special invitation to write to GWS; just follow rule #1, above. When we are planning to have a section of an issue focus on a specific topic or question, we write or call people ahead of time inviting them to write on that topic. These are readers whom we suspect (based on previous correspondence) have experience with the subject or something to say on the topic. The more we hear from you, the more likely we are to know what you might be able to write about and thus the more likely we are to think of you when a particular topic comes up. For our regular Focus section, we ask kids who have written in the past, kids who have said they would like to write, and – mostly – kids chosen at random from the Directory and pen-pal listings. If you want to be asked to write for an upcoming Focus, drop us a card, or, better yet, write a GWS story about something else (your thoughts or experiences, your response to something in a previous issue).

We love hearing from readers whether or not we are able to publish the story, as all letters give us valuable information and food for thought.

Subscriptions & Renewals

Subscriptions start with the next issue published. Our current rates are $25 for 6 issues, $45 for 12 issues, $60 for 18 issues. GWS is published every other month. A single issue costs $6.

Rates for **Canadian** subscribers: $29/yr.
Outside of North America: $40/yr airmail, $29/yr surface mail (allow 2-3 months). Subscribers in U.S. territories pay U.S. rates.

Foreign payments must be either money orders in US funds or checks drawn on US banks. We can't afford to accept personal checks from Canadian accounts, even if they have "US funds" written on them. We suggest that foreign subscribers use MasterCard or Visa if possible.

Address Changes: If you're moving, let us know your new address as soon as possible. Please enclose a recent label (or copy of one). Issues missed because of a change of address (that we weren't notified about) may be replaced for $3 each. The post office destroys your missed issues and charges us a notification fee, so we can't afford to replace them without charge.

Renewals: At the bottom of the next page is a form you can use to renew your subscription. Please help us by renewing early.

How can you tell when your subscription expires? Look at this sample label:

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The number that is underlined in the example tells the date of the final issue for the subscription. The Smiths' sub expires with our 02/01/97 issue (#115, the next issue, which will say Mar./Apr. 1997 on the cover). But if we were to receive their renewal before the end of the previous month (1/31), they would qualify for the free bonus issue.

Reward for bringing in new subscribers: If you convince someone to become a new subscriber - to take out a subscription at $25 a year - you will receive a $5 credit which you can apply to any John Holt's Book and Music Store order or to your own subscription renewal.

Declassified Ads

Rates: 70c/word, $1/word boldface. Please tell these folks you saw the ad in GWS.

"ART FROM THE HEART" - an exciting new 59-page art instruction manual for ages 5 to 17 with helpful lessons, detailed instructions, student samples and work sheets. Send $14.95 E.M. Carolin, 809 S. Michigan, Conrad MT 59425. 406-278-5405.

Mortensen Math can change your child's attitude about math! Call today for FREE CATALOG 1-800-338-9939. Special SAVINGS for GWS readers. Internet email to: MATH4UZC@aol.com

CD ROM Educational Software used in the best school systems in the country. Titles range from early elementary to SAT preparation. Call for **FREE** catalog. 508-791-1096; 1-800-484-1259 (4242)

Start your own instructional video business. Earn extra income with our catalogs containing some of the best educational and how-to videos you've ever seen, and many you probably never even knew existed. For kids and adults. Celestial navigation, magic, home-building, conquering algebra, parenting, and much, much more. Free brochure. 1-800-262-3822 ext 70984.

AU PAIR positions available in Spain, Italy. Live with foreign family, help with house and kids. Learn first hand culture and language. Minimum age 18. Airfare not included. Pocket money earned. International Au Pair (est. 1985), 50954 O'Byrne Rd, Chilliwack BC V4Z 1B6 Canada, tel. 604-824-0242.

Love Kids & Books? Become a consultant with **Usborne Books at Home!** Home parties, book fairs, & more. 800+ educational, lavishly illustrated children's books – the BEST on the market! Free information packet: 800-705-7137.

Teen unschooler wanted to mentor me (via letters) in pop music appreciation. In return, I can give specific recommendations in classical, jazz, women's music, country, international, Latin, blues. Write: Ronald A. Richardson, 4003 50th Av SW, Seattle WA 98116.

HOME-BASED BUSINESS telecommunications rep., no inventory to maintain, minimum investment, low risk, lower your phone bill, be at home with your family. Send SASE to Tammy Billeci, 607 Arcadia Terrace #202, Sunnyvale CA 94086.

HICCUPS & LAUGHS: Blues, Horns, & Woodwinds. 20-song cassette (6 vocals) $15 p.p. Music from long ago. You will hear "needle noise." Mono, not stereo. Money back (with return of tape) if not pleased. **Paint Spaught Records**, POB 1809, Shelton, WA 98584. 7% proceeds pledged to animal support. Comments welcome.

We are a homeschool family with a 5 year old boy. We have a homestead and fruit and nut tree orchard on the Mattole River in rural N. Calif. We would like to have a community of families living here, sharing gardens, homesteading, etc. We have a 2 bdrm cottage that is available for renting. We would like to have a family rent the cabin with the future hope of buying into a permanent homestead. We are also open and want to talk with people about different ways of building a community of families here on our farm. Call 707-986-7787 or write GREGORI FAMILY FARM, 1901 Dutyville Rd, Garberville CA 95542.

Do you want ... more **energy**? More **time**? More **money**? Incredible home-business opportunity with a solid, visionary company. You can **create the life you want** and have **financial freedom**. Anne McMurtry, 3403 Summerbrooke Dr, Richmond, VA 23235. 804-276-4471.

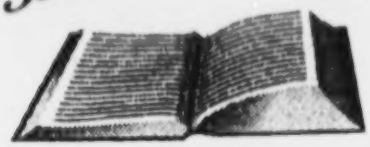
WANTED: MORE FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN. Several townhouses for sale in cooperative, intergenerational neighborhood. 2-4 bedrooms plus work space, $126,000 and up. Large central comunity building. Optional shared meals, safe play areas, gardens, playmates and caring adults nearby. 4+ wooded acres in town, radiant floor heating, high bandwith communications. Ideal for homeschoolers! Construction '97. Westwood CoHousing Community, PO Box 16116, Asheville, NC 28816. 704-232-1110. http://www.automatrix.com/~bak/westwood.html

SEIZE THE MOMENT! Before your child grows up illiterate. All academia is dependent upon the skill of reading, and more importantly, the ability to read the Bible is a must. How to Teach Reading - "for Teachers, Parents, Tutors," by Edward Fry, Ph.D., could be what you need to teach your child to read successfully. From determining reading ability, to selecting appropriate materials, to teaching vocabulary, phonics, and writing skills, this book is a must. Includes reading tests, lists, and excellent teaching advice. $14.95 each. (We recommend two copies instead of sharing.) Also - WE HAVE IT! The elusive and unique Douay-Rheims Bible. Similar in grammar to KJV, translated directly from Latin. Black, leather, 5 1/2" x 8 1/2". $35.00 each. Enclose $4.95 ship/hdlg first item, $1.00 each additional. Send check, money order promptly to: The Lion and the Lamb™, PO Box 858, Dept. 600, Norwich, NY 13815-0859. N.Y.S. residents add applicable sales tax to total including ship/hdlg. Owner: Sherie Lynn Warner, 607-859-2382. 30-day satisfaction guaranteed or refund.

Spanish is Cool and Easy to Learn! Children ages 3 to 12 will quickly understand and learn Spanish by using their senses: **seeing, hearing, performing the action**, and **saying** the Spanish words. Fun videos and games that teach Spanish. Call for a free brochure. 1-800-VERY COOL or 1-800-837-9266.

Creative, child-loving, 18 yr. female looking to live/work w/family in France or a French-speaking country. Deborah Shoval, 1670 Alder St, Eugene, OR 97401.

Book Reviews



Meg Mackintosh Solve-It-Yourself Mysteries

by Lucinda Landon
The Case of Missing Babe Ruth Baseball $3346
The Case of the Curious Whale Watch #3344
The Mystery at the Medieval Castle #3342
The Mystery at Camp Creepy #3350
The Mystery in the Locked Library #3348
all mysteries $4.95. Postage $2 for one, $3.50 for two or three; $4.50 for four or five

Our family enjoyed reading mysteries aloud together, but after a while, my girls wanted to do more than listen; they wanted to be actively involved in solving the case. We've found the Meg Mackintosh series wonderfully challenging and satisfying. These 60-page mysteries (which you can read in any order) are great for sleuths aged about 7 to 12. Beginning readers can hear the mystery read aloud and then use their early reading skills to help solve it – to choose book titles in a library scene, examine handwritten messages, or notice items out of sequence. More experienced readers can usually solve the mystery on their own.

Each book sets up the story within the first few pages, and then, before too long, a question is posed. The child hazards a guess, flips a page to see if it's correct, and gets immediate satisfaction from seeing that the correct answer moves the story along. A few pages later, another question comes, and again the correct answer propels the child through the story. When the children solve the mystery with Meg at the end, it is very satisfying: many puzzles culminating in the final solution.

Detective Science

by Jim Wiese. #3352 $12.95 + $3.50 postage

After we had solved Meg Mackintosh mysteries together and gone on treasure hunts, my children still wanted more detective work. So I created a Detective Club with a few other children, in which we learned about fingerprints, identifying handwriting, deciphering Morse Code, and more. It was great fun, but it took lots of thinking on my part about what detectives really do and what skills they need. I really wanted a handbook I could refer to, with ideas, games, and a list of materials. If only the book *Detective Science* had been published years ago, when I created the club. But the rest of you who have inquisitive, puzzle-hungry, mystery-solving children can take advantage of it.

Detective Science has 40 projects with easy-to-follow directions. Most are hands-on activities using items that are easily available. Some activities can be done in ten minutes, some take an hour, and some need to sit overnight or for several days. A Detective Club could get together and use this book for about 18 hour- or hour-and-a-half-long meetings.

The projects start out quite simply, and sometimes even seem too obvious, but there are related activities called "More Fun Stuff to Do" that include more difficult projects, so the book can serve a variety of ages and abilities. The accompanying "Detectives in Action" stories lend an air of authority as they explain how the projects in the book revealed important clues to detectives solving real crimes.

Here's an example of how the possibilities move from simple to more complex: taking lip prints is easy to do with paper and lipstick. The book shows eight different print patterns to match yours up to. Easy enough. "More Fun Stuff to Do" suggests that a group make a set of prints and then play a game of sending one person out of the room and having one of the remaining people drink from a glass, leaving a print. The returning player tries to detect whose prints are on the glass. More information about the uniqueness of lip prints follows in the "Explanation" section, and the "Detectives in Action" story is about a bank robber who was convicted on the basis of his lip prints on the demand note. Just one example of how this book can lead to lots of fun and learning. – Day Farenga

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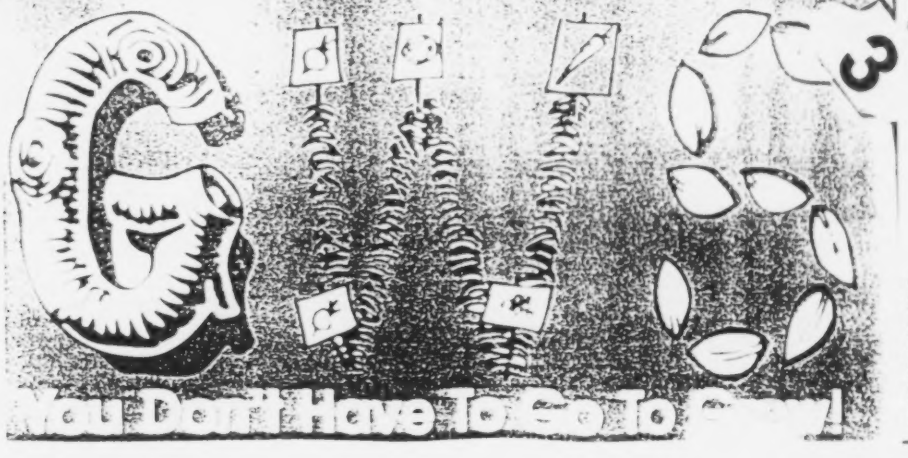

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GROWING WITHOUT SCHOOLING

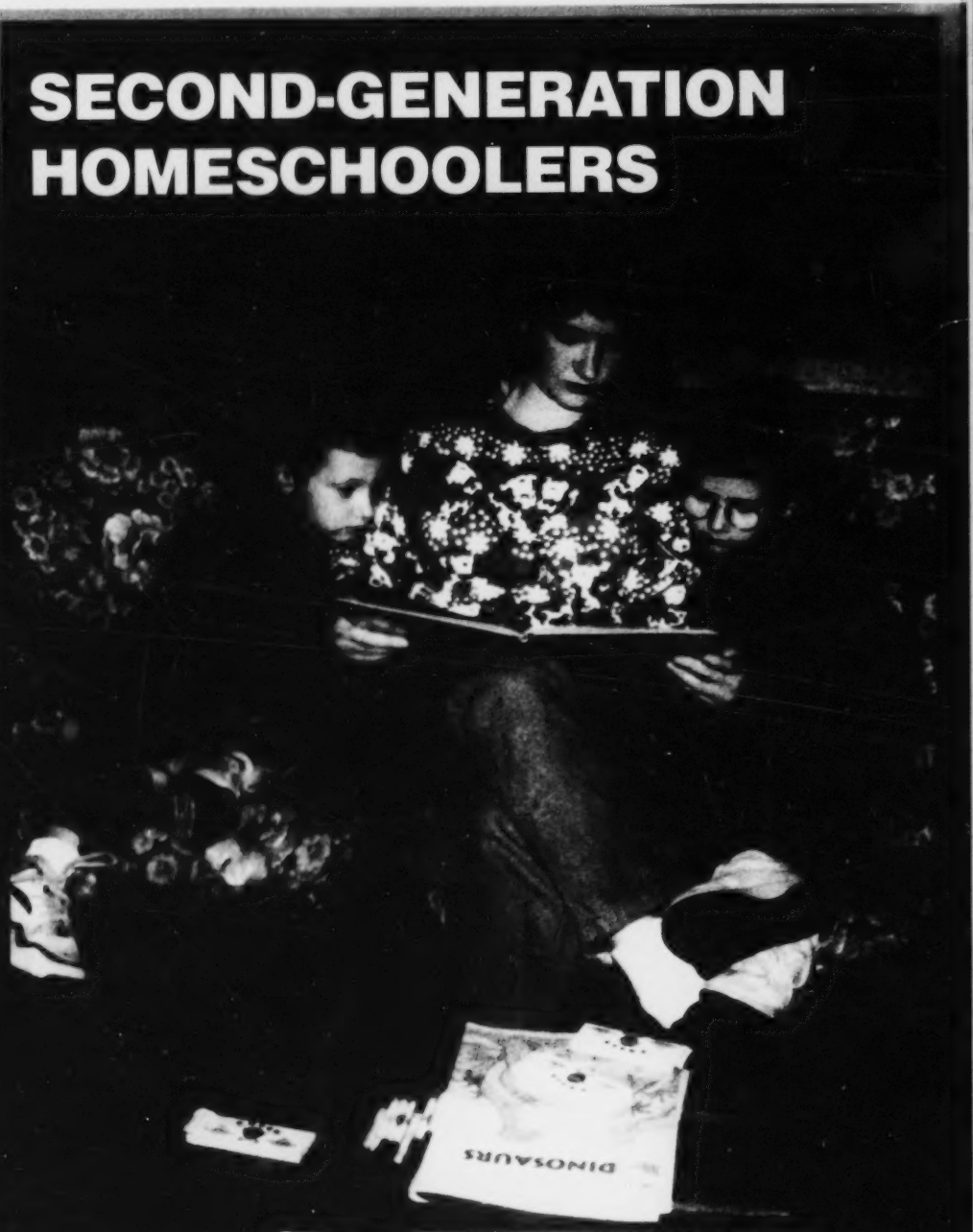
U.S. $6 Issue 115 March/April '97

Late Readers Turn Out OK

College Admissions Guidelines

Child-Run Study Groups

SECOND-GENERATION HOMESCHOOLERS



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Issue #115
Mar./Apr. '97

GWS

Founded in 1977
By John Holt

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GWS Illustrations by Emily Linn
Cover photo is of Julie Miller with Phillip (right) and Spencer.
See Second-Generation Homeschoolers, p. 6.

Growing Without Schooling #115 Vol. 19, No. 6, ISSN #0275-5305. Published by Holt Associates, 2269 Mass. Ave., Cambridge MA 02140. $25/yr. Date of issue: February 1, 1997. Second class postage paid at Boston, MA and at additional mailing offices.
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to GWS, 2269 Mass. Ave, Cambridge, MA 02140.
ADVERTISERS: Space reservation deadlines are the 1st of odd-numbered months. Copy deadlines are the 15th. Write for rates.

In this issue

One of the last pieces John Holt wrote for *Growing Without Schooling* was about two homeschoolers who had just begun to read at age 12. He described their rapid progress, made the observation that a late-reading child often has an early-reading sibling, and then emphasized that in school those two children would almost certainly have been put into remedial classes and had all kinds of labels "stuck on them." He concluded by saying, "If children who start reading when they feel like it soon read just as well as or better than most people, what difference does it make when they start? So, if you have children who start reading later than most, tell us about them – and don't worry."

John wrote that in early 1985, and in the twelve years that followed, people did continue to tell us about children who were older than 6 or 7 and not yet reading. These parents couldn't always follow John's advice about not worrying, since the rest of the world found it hard to allow families to conduct such a daring experiment and not worry about the outcome. We've heard many painful stories about relatives criticizing homeschooling families for having a not-yet-reading child, of other children teasing or questioning the homeschooler, and, sometimes, of the children themselves feeling doubtful or frustrated about not yet being able to do something that everyone considers so important.

Throughout the years, we've also been able to print stories of reassurance, from both parents and young people. Now, in 1997, we're able to offer what I hope can serve as the greatest reassurance of all: reflections from grown homeschoolers who are doing just fine – in fact, exceptionally well – in college and in their chosen work, and who, as it happens, were rather late readers as children. Of the many interesting observations they both make, perhaps the most important is that if children are viewed in terms of their strengths rather than their weaknesses, the so-called weaknesses (in other words, the areas they don't happen to be attending to at the time) will take care of themselves. Luke stresses that in Boy Scouts, he was known as the one who was good at knot-tying and camping, not the one who was bad at reading. And caring about those other things eventually helped him want to work to read through the Boy Scout Handbook. Emily describes how her parents made sure she had opportunities to conclude she was capable and smart, opportunities that didn't depend on reading – and again, it was eventually those other capabilities and interests that led Emily to discover what genuine place reading could hold in her life.

Years ago, we printed a piece from a learning disability specialist who commented, "Our entire field is *deficit-driven*." Let's let the interviews in this issue remind us that homeschooling, in contrast, can be strength-driven. When I read the confident, insightful reflections of these two grown homeschoolers, it frightens me to think that they might ever have concluded they were inadequate as learners or as people. Luckily, they didn't have to.

– Susannah Sheffer

News & Reports

Federal Government's Role in Homeschooling

A publication titled "Serving Private School Students With Federal Education Programs," from the federal government's Office of Non-Public Education, includes the following comment about homeschooling:

All states allow homeschooling and consider it a legitimate option for meeting compulsory education requirements. Regulation and support of homeschooling are carried out at the state and local levels. However, the federal government also plays an important role by disseminating research-based information to policymakers and others, and by supporting research on a broad range of issues affecting teaching and learning. A brochure entitled Home Schooling Resources for Parents and Children is available free while supplies last by calling ACCESS ERIC at 1-800-LET-ERIC.

Will Teenagers Vote?

Amanda Bergson-Shilcock (PA), a grown homeschooler who has advocated for young people's right to vote, sent us two articles from the *Christian Science Monitor* about 16- and 17-year-olds in the German state of Lower Saxony being given the right to vote in local elections. What was interesting was the contrast between the article that ran before the elections and the one that ran afterwards. In the first article, teenagers who were quoted seemed mostly uninterested in voting or doubtful that young people could make sound decisions. The second article, however, reports that the turnout among young voters was higher than anyone expected:

"Advocates of the teen franchise were prepared to declare victory if turnout reached one-third of those eligible. But in the first round of voting Sept. 15, the turnout for 16- and 17-year-olds was roughly 50 percent. In the capital city of Hannover, where the mayoral race drew nationwide attention, 'kid voters' turned out in almost the same numbers as the general population – 56.7 percent, as compared with 57 percent.

" 'I've got to compliment the young people on their turnout,' Minister-President Gerhard Schröder, a Social Democrat, commented in Bonn. 'They thought through the issues, came up with a position, and voted.'" (CSM, 10/2/96)

In other words, you can't be sure what people will do, or how capably they will act, until you give them a chance and see what happens.

What Intrinsic Motivation Means

Amanda also sent another *Christian Science Monitor* article about a reading incentive program, called Earning by Learning, which offers children cash for every book they read (the article reports that the program has been tried in 17 states). The program's supporters say the money motivates kids to read, but others disagree:

"... The program has drawn widespread criticism from educators who see ethical and educational problems with paying children to learn. But proponents argue that incentives, from gold stars to the corporate-financed pizza coupons awarded in some schools, have always been a part of the process, just as teachers have always struggled to instill students with a love of learning."

And from later on in the article:

"Money is a poor incentive, critics argue, because it is divorced from the intrinsic rewards of classroom learning: winning a teacher's approval, moving to a higher academic level, earning a good grade. ... 'Generally, teachers feel that you don't instill the love of learning in a child by paying them to read a book,' says Charmayne Marsh, spokeswoman for the American Federation of Teachers. 'Why not give them ribbons or prizes, something that would make them stand out in the classroom?'" (CSM, 10/16/96)

Grades and approval, ribbons and prizes, are intrinsic motivators? It appears that an interest in what's in the book, or a general curiosity about the world, is just *too* intrinsic for people in schools to imagine. What would Alfie Kohn, author of *Punished by Rewards*, have to say?

Access to School Activities in Maine

Jan Emerson wrote a few months ago in the newsletter of the Maine Home Education Association:

For the past year, I've participated with a committee of diverse people whose purpose for meeting was to discuss homeschoolers' access to public schools. We began by assessing what the current level of access is. This was done through a survey we developed and mailed to all Maine school districts and another survey mailed to all homeschoolers in Maine.

What we learned was that 80% of the school districts allow homeschoolers access to public schools. This access was in some cases as simple as the use of the library and textbooks when available and in other cases included participation in sports, classes, and extra-curricular activities. We also learned 20% of the districts allow no access whatsoever. With this information we began to dialogue as a committee on how to resolve this apparent inequity. ...

Our mission became one of

writing legislation that would open the doors to 20% of the schools who offer no access, broaden the access in other districts, and encourage continued access to those districts who were already offering [it]. Our committee consisted of eleven people: representatives of the Maine School Boards Association, the Maine Superintendents Association, the Maine Education Association (representing teachers), the State Board of Education, the Maine Principals Association, the Maine Home Education Association, a homeschool parent, a homeschool support group leader, a homeschool student, Buzz Kastuck from the State Department of Education, and a chairperson who is an interim Superintendent. We were evenly divided between school personnel and homeschoolers.

Our discussions were, at first, tentative, with controversial issues being placed on the table with care. As we spent more time with each other and grew to know each other better, we were able to discuss controversial issues with great openness and express concerns and desires from all points of view. Through these discussions, we came up with wording for legislation that was then reworded and refined. After three or four of these revision sessions, we felt we had a proposal to send to the Education Committee. We actually sent two proposals. One was very broad and general and the other quite specific and prescriptive. The decision for which would become a legislative piece was left up to the Education Committee. The committee chose the more specific piece.

Marge Kilkelly presented [the proposed legislation] at a public hearing on a very snowy day in March. There were people in attendance representing all interested parties .... All who spoke did so in favor of the bill. Since I became involved with homeschooling in 1983, I have not attended a public hearing concerning homeschooling where not one person was in opposition! We've been doing a great job as homeschoolers, and we've come a long way in being recognized and accepted for what we're doing. After the hearing, the Education Committee held some work sessions where they continued to fine tune the wording. On May 4, 1996, the bill became Public Law 610. If you would like a copy of this bill, call the Law Library at 207-287-1600 and ask for a copy of PL 610.

[SS:] We spoke with Jan Emerson at the end of December, and she said that the new law requires each school district to have a policy about homeschoolers' school access in place by January 1, 1997. The law doesn't offer specific guidelines regarding these policies, but it does state that although specific policies may vary, each must allow access to textbooks, sports, and extra-curricular activities. Jan said that on the whole, the process of working toward this legislation was very positive, with "a lot of give and take and great understanding of the other side. Each side learned a lot about what the other side's concerns were."

Office News

[SS:] On November 27th, homeschooling mother Tammy Rosenblatt and I were guests on The Connection, a Boston-area NPR show hosted by Christopher Lydon. In the hour-long radio show, we were able to cover a fair amount, and several of the callers made important points as well (the host was particularly impressed by the articulate children and teenagers who called in). If you're interested in ordering a tape of the show, call WBUR at 617-353-2790.

Check the calendar, below, to see the many conferences at which we will be speaking and exhibiting books this spring. As always, we hope to see many GWS readers at these events.

Subscribers frequently tell us, "People are always borrowing my GWS issues and I never have them when I need them." We used to say, "Try encouraging those people to get their own subscriptions," but sometimes we'd hear, quite understandably, "People are reluctant to subscribe until they've had a chance to read at least one issue." Now that single issues of GWS are available on many newsstands around the country (in bookstores where periodicals are sold, in food co-ops, and so on), there's an option that will benefit all of us. Suggest that interested people look for

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GWS locally and purchase their own copy. Buying one copy is less of a commitment than a subscription for people just thinking about homeschooling, and it's easier to buy a magazine locally than to send away for it. Meanwhile, subscribers won't have to lend out so many issues, and we at GWS will benefit from having the newsstand issues sold rather than destroyed (most distributors don't return unsold issues). So, encouraging people to buy GWS locally is an easy way to help us and make it easier for readers, too.

Calendar

April 4, 1997: Six Flags Over Georgia Homeschool Family Day in **Atlanta** Georgia. For info: Harvest Home Educators, 770-455-0449.

April 4: Six Flags Fiesta Texas Homeschool Day and Curriculum Fair in **San Antonio**, Texas. For info: Harvest Home Educators, 770-455-0449.

April 5, 1997: Maryland Home Education Association conference in **Takoma Park, MD**. Pat and Day Farenga doing workshops; books available for sale. For information: Manfred Smith (410) 730-0073

April 8: Talk by Susannah Sheffer sponsored by Pathfinder Learning Center in **Amherst, MA**. For info: Pathfinder, 413-253-9412.

April 11-12: Harvest Home Educators Annual Conference and Curriculum Fair at Gwinnett County Fairgrounds in Lawrenceville (near **Atlanta**), Georgia. For info: 770-455-0449.

April 25-26: Wisconsin Parents Assoc. 14th annual conference at the Univ. Center in **Stevens Pt, WI**. For info: Melissa Rice, 715-341-6378 or WPA, 608-283-3131.

May 22: Rethinking Education conference in **Dallas**, TX. Pat Farenga speaking; books available for sale. For info: Barb Lundgren, 817-540-6423.

May 31: Pennsylvania Home Education Network conference at **Geneva College, PA.** Pat Farenga speaking; books available for sale. For info: Diana Baseman, 412-265-2734.

June 21-22: The Link (Kid-Comfortable) Conference in **West Lake, CA**. Pat and Day Farenga doing workshops; books available for sale. Also John Gatto, the Colfaxes. For info: Mary Leppert. 805-492-1373.

Aug. 8-10: Conference celebrating Growing Without Schooling's 20th Anniversary, at the Westin Hotel in Waltham (near **Boston**), MA. David & Micki Colfax, John Gatto, workshops by veteran homeschoolers. For info: GWS, 617-864-3100.

Aug. 23-25: Home Education Resource Organization conference in **Columbus, OH**. Pat Farenga speaking; books available for sale. For info: Chris O'Connor, 614-852-7926.

Aug. 22-29: Second annual international Not Back to School Camp, hosted by Grace Llewellyn, in **Oregon**. Still has room for approx. 24 boys ages 13 to 18 (girls' spaces are filled). Register by 3/18. For info, send $1 to PO Box 1014, Eugene OR 97440.

We are happy to print announcements of major homeschooling events, but we need plenty of notice. Deadline for GWS #116 (events in May or later) is March 10. Deadline for GWS #117 (events in July or later) is May 10. ◆

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Second-Generation Homeschoolers

Julie Miller (OK) writes:

I am a 24-year-old second-generation unschooler, with three boys, Phillip (6), Spencer (4), and Patrick (19 months). I notice a fundamental difference between myself and first-generation unschoolers. To me, learning is a way of life and is inseparable from life. When I first decided to unschool my children, to satisfy my own curiosity I researched how the school system separates knowledge into individual compartments. I had no idea which things would fit under which subject headings. I discovered, during this time, that I had learned more "school" stuff growing up than I ever realized. When I discussed this with my mother, she said that if she had told us something was school, we wouldn't have touched it with a ten-foot pole. After all my research, I have come full circle in my thinking and I understand why my mom made the choices she did. I now feel no need to fit things under subject headings.

I remember the time I thought I wasn't very good at math and then I helped my public school friend who was failing algebra. She passed the class that year, after I helped her, and she understood algebra. I was never tested when I was growing up; as a matter of fact, the thought of being tested made me sick to my stomach. But it was experiences like that one with my friend that gave me added confidence.

I had gone to public school until third grade, which was a horrible experience for me and also the reason I was taken out of school. The emotional and psychological damage was so great that I needed to deschool for a year before I could begin doing anything, and it was for that reason that my mother didn't openly label my activities as learning or schoolwork.

When I was around 10, I was constantly complaining of being bored, and my mother kept telling me that boredom was inside myself and I was going to have to fix it. I decided I might like to volunteer at a veterinarian's office. Mom said if I wanted to be taken seriously, I would need to go down there on my own. She helped me come up with what I would say, and after practicing my speech a few times, I set off on my bike and rode about a mile to the local animal hospital. The vet was not in, and I was very nervous knowing I would have to come back later, but I did, and with very sweaty palms I asked the vet if I could volunteer in exchange for knowledge and information. He asked me if I was supposed to be in school, and I told him I was a homeschooler and my hours were flexible. He said it would be OK for me to volunteer, and I started out cleaning things and sitting in on the office visits. I soon was in charge of all the animals that were up for adoption; that entailed vaccinating them myself, checking them for worms after being shown how to work the microscope and properly identify the type of worm, giving them the correct wormer and dosage, and keeping accurate records of what had been done to each animal. I also filed cards and cleaned and sterilized syringes and took care of the greyhounds the vet raised and raced. I regularly called my parents for permission to stay after dark to assist in surgery.

The people I worked with never treated me as a child. I was treated with respect and given a chance to prove my worth. I worked with them for a year and a half until we moved to another state.

To meet new friends in the area, we enrolled in a soccer club. I took an interest in becoming a referee, so I checked and found out that there was no age limit. I studied the rules and took the state test along with the adults. I was very nervous because I was never tested at home, but I passed with flying colors (while some of the adults failed!). At 12, I was the youngest certified referee in our state at that time. I refereed and played soccer for several years.

When I was 16, I went to the Vocational-Technical school and took automotive paint and body. I enjoyed what I was doing very much. Nobody gave me any problems for being homeschooled. I had a tough time at first being the only girl in the class, but I quickly made friends and only ever had problems with one guy in the class. I met my husband in that class.

He still does body work for a living, while I stay home with the kids. He lets me work with him any time I want to, and I always take the kids with me.

During my unschooling years, I never lacked a social life. I always had friends and a constant supply of boyfriends. People sometimes say, "Won't you be sorry you didn't get the prom and graduation?" I have been to my husband's prom and graduation and I thought they were a sorry disappointment from what we are led to expect.

I remember that sometimes when I was a child, a stranger would approach me and give me a pop quiz. I remember feeling very uncomfortable in these situations, and it helped that my mom had told us we need not respect someone merely because they were an adult. People must earn respect from others. However, this is an area in which my having been homeschooled myself enables me to help my children, because I can give them some pre-set answers they may use if they ever find themselves in this situation: first, it is rude to quiz someone unless they ask you to; second, if the person is interested in your education, they should take it up with your parents.

I never met another kid who tried to test me. They were just curious about how we did it. I sometimes showed them my workbooks - Key Curriculum for math, Wordly Wise for English – and explained how we did things, what we did with our day, etc. We always did the work and checked it ourselves, and if it was wrong, we redid it until we found the mistake and understood the problem. Other kids often asked me if I cheated. The answer is no, because if I had, I would only have cheated myself. Sometimes I looked at the school kids' books to see how they did things. I always found myself ahead of my age grade.

My biggest fear when I was a kid was that I wasn't learning enough. But now that I realize I was learning, I am able to use my firsthand knowledge of unschooling to better assist my children. I have fewer worries than other homeschooling parents I have talked to. I know that my children are fully capable of learning on their own. I see my job as a facilitator, to help the boys gain access to anything they may feel necessary to their education.

I first considered unschooling when my oldest was 2, but initially, I was afraid that I was passing my fears from my own bad school experiences onto my kids. I also thought that if I unschooled them, it would be taking the easy way out. My husband had gone to public school all his life and he felt we could easily do a better job at home. Phillip wanted to stay home, and we decided to do it. Although I was sure that kids could learn on their own once they could read and write, I wasn't sure how you got them started reading and writing, maybe because we hadn't yet been homeschooling when I was that age. At first I tried helping Phillip every day, but I quickly noticed that wasn't working. I got a GWS subscription and started reading John Holt. I also read *In Their Own Way* by Thomas Armstrong, which gave me helpful ideas for alternative ways of presenting things to the kids if they expressed an interest in something but were having trouble with it. Gradually I saw that Phillip picked up the alphabet: I got him an alphabet placemat, and later that day he was singing it. We drew the alphabet in chalk on our sidewalk and jumped on the letters as we sang them. Phillip would lie in the backyard swing and write letters in the dirt. He wrote them in shaving cream on the table. Now, when I write, he writes. I never tell him what to write. Sometimes he asks me how to spell a particular word. He often asks me to read back to him what he wrote. That's when I explained about vowels and how we need them to make words other people can read. He uses vowels in all his words now.

On my frustrating days, and having a toddler seems to have increased them, we take a break from whatever we are doing and we all go play for a while. I sometimes make a list of what is bothering me and then make a list of possible solutions. Generally things aren't nearly as bad as I thought they were. If I am concerned about how much we are learning, I cut back on how much television we are watching, try to do more fun projects and reading together, sit down and write or draw with the boys, or talk to them to help them with their goals. Pretty soon we seem to be back on track. ◆

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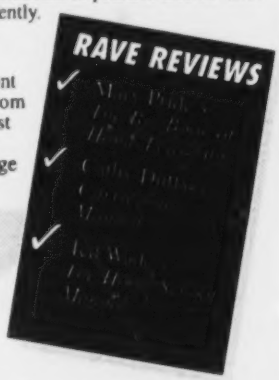

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Letter from a College Admissions Officer

Nicky Hardenbergh (MA) wrote to Stanford University to ask about any special admissions requirements for homeschoolers and received a reply from Jonathan Reider, Senior Associate Director of Undergraduate Admissions. The reply is one Stanford sends to all homeschooling parents who inquire, and Mr. Reider gave GWS permission to quote from it here. Do bear in mind that the letter addresses Stanford's admissions policies only, not the policies of colleges in general. Following the letter, we offer some comments to set Stanford's guidelines in a broader context.

... During the last few years we have seen a steady increase in applications from families who are homeschooling their children. Such students are no longer unusual for us, and several are usually admitted and enroll at Stanford each year. They are, of course, still a small minority in our applicant pool. We are scrupulously fair in evaluating these applicants, and they are not at any disadvantage in the admission process. At the same time, as you may already recognize, these applicants present us with some special challenges, and in what follows I will suggest how your students can best address these issues when they apply.

First, we do not have a required curriculum or set of courses for applicants to Stanford. ... Primarily, we want them to be able to demonstrate that they have successfully undertaken a serious, rigorous course of study. They should definitely provide a detailed description of their curriculum when they apply, but it is not necessary to follow a prescribed or approved homeschooling program. All the ones I have seen are reasonably good; the central issue for us is *how* they have gone about the learning process, not how many hurdles they have jumped.

The most obvious difficulty homeschooled students face is the lack of a conventional high school transcript. This is actually not as serious a problem as you might expect since there is not a great deal of difference between someone with no grades at all and someone with excellent grades but from a small, rural high school with which we are otherwise unfamiliar. Grades are more meaningful when they help us distinguish between students in larger high schools.

Homeschooled records lack such a comparative context, of course. In a less competitive world, where we could take all qualified students, such comparisons would be unnecessary. But we must select a few (fewer than 20% each year) especially talented and interesting applicants from a large pool of able students. Any way your students can stand out academically can help their cause.

In all students, we look for a clear sense of their intellectual growth and quest for knowledge. What is their level of intellectual vitality? How have they sustained their curiosity? Homeschooled students may even have a potential advantage over others in this aspect of the application since they have consciously chosen and pursued an independent course of study. In particular, we would like to hear from them in the application about how the family chose homeschooling, how the learning was organized, and what benefits (and costs, if any) they have derived from the experience.

Overall, the students' writing about themselves and their education can play an even more central role in their application than it would for a conventional high school student. This kind of self-inquiry is difficult for some students because our society tends to discourage reflection about intellectual questions, as opposed to vocational goals, but we strongly encourage the effort, as much for the educational benefits of taking stock of oneself as for the admissions process.

This is doubly important at Stanford because, unlike some independent colleges, we do not use interviews as part of the admissions process, either for homeschooled students or anyone else. The entire evaluation is based on the written application and supporting materials.

With little other quantitative information about them, homeschooled students standardized test scores (SAT, ACT) also take on more significance than they might for other students. Normally, test scores are factored in along with grades, rank in class, and a judgment of the quality of the school and the student's program. Tests are never decisive by themselves. We require the SAT I or the ACT, but we do not require any SAT II Subject Tests (previously known as Achievement Tests). However, we do strongly recommend them, and it is even more important for homeschooled students to take them simply because we hesitate to rely too much on any single piece of data such as an SAT I score.

Another issue is recommendations. Typically, we require three recommendations, two from teachers of the student's choice and one from a guidance counselor or other school official. The parents of a homeschooled applicant can write one recommendation in place of all three, and while these are helpful in conveying in detail the context of the student's educational experience, they also lack one crucial element, the objectivity a regular teacher may have of being able to compare the child with other students they have taught. We do not expect parents to make such a comparison (all parents are naturally proud of their own children), but we have to compare them to thousands of applicants for whom we have some objective view. Of course, teachers and guidance counselors can be biased too. For this reason we ask for three letters in the hope that they will independently reinforce each other. If a student is able to take a community college course or two during their high school years or has a tutor outside the family as part of the homeschooling program, these teachers can write the teacher recommen-

dations and thus provide some non-parental evaluation. In other words, anything they can do to support their applications with standard credentials will reduce any misgivings we might have about admitting a student with no recent formal educational experience.

Sometimes homeschooled students have difficulty displaying a high level of social involvement normally found in extra-curricular activities, since they do not have team sports, student government, a band, a newspaper, an honor society, etc. ... Yet this might be less of an obstacle than one might first expect. We regularly see applications from [school] students whose main focus of nonacademic activity is outside of school. They are often involved in sports, community service, religious life, drama, local politics, or work with a dedication and energy that we find very attractive, and easy comparable to conventional high school activities. ...

[SS:] I thought it might help readers if I offered some thoughts about Stanford's guidelines, particularly in light of what I've heard or seen of other homeschoolers' college admissions experiences.

First, bear in mind that Stanford is one of the most competitive schools in the country, so other schools may have less need to compare applicants to each other. As well, an increasing number of schools are making the SAT optional (send a SASE to FairTest, 342 Broadway, Cambridge MA 02139, for the current list).

For Stanford and other competitive schools, Mr. Reider's point about grades is well worth remembering. He's saying that it's more important to spend time conveying what the student has actually done during the high school years than it is to create a transcript with course names and grades. Other schools, often state universities, differ in that they really do want to see grades, and in that case, homeschoolers typically create a transcript (take all the activities that would fall under the category of English, and call them "English," or call them, "Modern Literature," "Composition," "Journalism," and so on, and then grade them in whatever way makes sense to you).

Another point I see arising from Stanford's guidelines is that for competitive schools, it's important to show both how one is like, or comparable to, everyone else, and also how one stands out. Homeschoolers need to convey two things in the same application: (1) Although we've done things in a nontraditional way, this student is indeed prepared for an intense and fairly traditional academic experience, and (2) Because we've done things differently, this student stands out in some particular ways, and has had a chance to develop in some particular ways.

Note my emphasis on the word "particular." Stanford's guidelines remind us that homeschooling itself is no longer so unusual that it, alone, can serve to explain what's different or special about any one homeschooling teenager. My advice is: focus on what you did with your homeschooling years, not just on the fact that you were homeschooling. If you want to say some of the general things that homeschoolers often say in their applications – that homeschooling helped you become more self-motivated or helped you develop your interests or helped you get to know yourself better – get as specific as you can about what those benefits meant for you. Help the admissions people *see* that all those things are true of you; don't just tell them.

As Mr. Reider mentions, Stanford is unusual among competitive schools for not using an in-person interview. Many homeschoolers report that the interview was a very strong part of their application, so for other colleges, the interview provides a further opportunity to demonstrate what I've just described.

The matter of recommendations is, in my experience, even easier to handle than Mr. Reider may realize, given how many opportunities homeschoolers have to work with adults other than their parents. Take his point, however, and try to get at least one recommendation from an adult who worked with you in what would be considered an academic context – not just your orchestra conductor or soccer coach (although them too, of course, especially if you are stressing those interests) but the scientist you volunteered with or your math tutor or the adult friend who critiqued your writing.

Last, note that Stanford's guidelines make no mention of the need for a high school diploma. This is typical, and a Harvard Admissions Officer said it years ago (GWS #73), and yet many parents still ask us, "How can my homeschooler get a diploma so that she can get into college?" Plenty of other materials are required for admission to a school like Stanford, as you've just read, but a diploma isn't one of them. ◆

Resources for Homeschoolers about College Admissions:

And What About College? by Cafi Cohen. A new book, just published by Holt Associates, that describes one homeschooling family's college admissions process and gives many helpful ideas for others. $18.95 + $4.50 s/h from Holt Assoc.

Life After Homeschooling GWS Issue Packet. 6 issues of GWS with stories about homeschoolers in college or working/apprenticing. Stories include details of the college admissions process. $19.00 + $4.50 s/h from Holt Assoc.

Teen Homeschoolers: College or Not, by Pat Farenga. In this transcript of a talk, Pat discuses how homeschoolers get into college and how they find work *without* college degrees. $2.95 + $2.00 s/h from Holt Assoc.

The Question is College, by Herbert Kohl. Look for a new edition of this classic book in your local bookstores this fall.

Child-Run Groups

Parents have created many wonderful groups for homeschoolers – and sometimes, the young people create and run their own groups. Here are two stories about groups, each with a specific focus, created and run by kids.

Study Club

Maureen Carey (MA) writes:

For the past four months, my 11-year-old daughter Aidin and seven of her homeschooling friends have been meeting twice a week for approximately four hours in what they have named a Study Club. They follow independent academic pursuits, usually working alone but in each other's company. This is how it came about:

Aidin has spent most of her childhood playing very imaginatively with her friends, with her brother, and alone with her toys. She has been read to a great deal, and has had formal lessons in drama, piano, recorder, ballet, Appalachian clogging, calligraphy, embroidery, swimming, gymnastics, photography, and Spanish, all at her own request. We have never done anything resembling school at home; we haven't even required music practice. Aidin didn't start reading by herself until she was 10, mostly because she had been too busy doing the things that captured her interest more than learning to read did. Once she started to read, she was able to read at, and far above, her "grade level" in just a few months. She could read Shakespeare aloud with expression and meaning, making about the same number of mistakes as her friends who started to read at 6 or 7. And she really has a good time reading.

During the year she was 10, she started to feel pressure to do what she thought of as "schoolwork." She was afraid her knowledge and skills were lacking in comparison with schooled contemporaries. These feelings were not based on hard evidence, as direct comparisons with her schooled acquaintances never showed her to be lacking. Our first solution was for me to sit down with her and work in the many school-type books of information on various subjects that our large home library has amassed over the years. This was of some use, but wasn't really satisfactory, because although neither of us minded it, Aidin didn't *love* it, and she was used to loving learning. Also, she wasn't happy that she often didn't really remember the math or geography or history we worked on under these circumstances.

The option of doing academic work entirely by herself has never appealed to Aidin, even though she enjoys and gets a lot out of both playing and reading alone. This fall, she hit upon the study club idea. It began when two of Aidin's homeschooling friends, sisters aged 12 and 13, also wanted to apply themselves more to academic work (one was even considering school). I offered to work with them on anything they wanted to do, and this appealed to them in the area of science experiments. They came to our house, quickly dug out the science books in our library, and headed for the kitchen table to enjoy some simple experiments.

I saw that they especially enjoyed being in charge of their own experiments, so I quickly backed off and left them alone, with the obvious rules about safety considerations and cleaning up whatever mess they made. Aidin and these friends had such a good time together and were so pleased with the results that they decided to commit to getting together regularly, not just to play together but with an academic focus. They made this plan on their own, only asking for my cooperation regarding the use of our house and enlisting me to be a responsible adult on the premises. They did not shut me out, but the energy for the club came from them. Although it had started with science, they felt it did not need to be limited to that, and they decided that each of them could work on whatever they were currently interested in, on their own or with anyone else who happened to want to work together.

They were quick to see that this would be fun for some of their other friends to join but wisely realized that a huge group would be unworkable, so they invited friends whom they thought would be able to work independently or to join in cooperatively on projects. We ended up with seven girls and one boy between the ages of 9 and 14. They told the others that this would be a study club and that everybody was to bring something to work on independently, but they would all be together while they worked. I think Aidin's idea was that she would be better able to focus if she were companionably surrounded by friends who were also working, even if they weren't working on the same thing. It reminds me of why some people like to go read or work in a library; they like the quiet energy of a room in which everyone else is concentrating too.

It is really a lovely sight. The kids bring bags of books and materials and work away by themselves or in pairs. For example, Aidin and another girl sometimes work on spelling together, giving each other words to spell. They're the only ones who have done this, because spelling isn't something the others want or need to work on. One girl brings history books and reads them, and occasionally she makes a comment about what she is reading, which inspires the others to talk about it. For a while, several of the kids were working on handwriting and calligraphy, by writing stories and paying particular attention to their handwriting. Again, this is something that Aidin in particular had felt she wanted to focus on; she wasn't satisfied with the way her handwriting looked. Some have brought math problems to work on as well. The atmosphere is purposeful and usually calm, although things can also get loud and even boisterous, especially during breaks. (The club meetings generally last about three or four hours. People leave at different times, depending on their family's schedules. The kids take

a lot of breaks, and eat a lot during those breaks - that's my role, to provide the food!)

The group has been just what Aidin needed. She is able to settle down comfortably and apply herself to the handwriting and spelling and math that had made her feel on edge before. She said, "I feel like all my problems have been solved. I can read well and I have figured out how to work on improving my other skills." I really want to stress that the kids are the energy behind this group. I'm often literally not in the room at all. When a new girl joined a few weeks after the group got started, and her mother asked her later about the group Maureen was running, the girl gave a surprised look and said, "Maureen is not running anything! The kids are running it themselves."

In the past two months, a new pattern has evolved which uses my involvement much more. The group had gotten several copies of Shakespeare's works and read *A Midsummer Night's Dream* aloud together. They enjoyed that so much that they immediately distributed parts for *Much Ado About Nothing*. Seeing this, I offered to do a literature course of sorts, in which we would discuss a book or play in an academic fashion, with me facilitating. I said I was willing to offer assignments – ideas of various things to do – which would be optional, and if they chose to do any of them, they could share them with each other, their parents, me, or no one. I even offered to give tests if they wanted to see what such a test would be like in school (since many of them are curious about how things are done in school). I won't give them grades, though.

The group liked the idea, and we are reading *Pride and Prejudice* now, which they chose because they all like Jane Austen because of the many quality films of her works that have come out recently. Some of them had already found the local Jane Austen society and had been to public lectures. They are enthralled by the book and are having a great time. We follow the practice of teaching literature that I learned in England, which is to read every paragraph of the book out loud together, explaining any detail that someone doesn't understand and thinking about the work of art that is being unveiled. The huge number of characters in the book can be confusing, so it is useful to be able to discuss them as we go along. I am also able to point out details in the descriptions of the characters that hint at how they will behave later on but could easily be missed.

The problem we have now is how to get a balance between the general study club and the literature class. It is so much fun reading together that it could take over too much of the eight hours the group has together. These children have too much else going on in their lives to schedule more meetings, but I realize this is a nice problem to have.

I never could have envisioned or planned these latest adventures in unschooling. I have had to be open to where Aidin and her friends lead, and to respond when asked. I sometimes think the person being most remarkably unschooled here is me.

Book Discussion Group

From Kate Dennis of Michigan:

For a couple of months, I've been leading a great books discussion group with five friends. Whenever I meet someone who has read a book I've read, I always like talking about it, and I decided that having a regular group would be fun and would be a good way to fulfill my English credits for Clonlara's Home-Based Education Program.

The first thing I did was make a list of books I wanted to read. I started with Clonlara's list of recommended reading, and I got ideas from other people, too. I included books that I knew I wanted to read because I had heard good things about them and books that I didn't know anything at all about but wanted to try.

Then I typed up a letter saying that I was planning to have a book discussion group that would meet once a month. Other people who had run similar groups had told me that once a month was about right, because it gave you plenty of time to read the books and to write about them. I sent the letter to homeschooling families that my family knew, and we placed ads in some local newsletters, too. In the letter, I explained that we would read the books on our own time, and write papers about them. During the meetings, we would watch films of the books and talk about both the books and the films. I thought of renting films of the books because that can be a good way to help people understand the books. I usually like to read the book before seeing the movie, and then, if the movie is a good one, it enhances my understanding of the book.

I gave some ideas for how to write the papers – give a short summary of the book, talk a bit about what you think the author's point was, maybe compare the movie to the book. But I said that really, people should write something that fit their own standards. If they wanted to compare the book to another book instead, or to write something totally different, they should do that. The point was to write something that you could be proud of.

The five of us who meet were all friends beforehand, so we were comfortable with each other and it was easy to get the group started. At times, it was harder than I expected to get people to talk, but when I was ready with questions, that would get the discussion going. I've learned that you can help people to recognize that what they're saying really is a valid thought, that it's worth talking about.

The five of us are high school age, but the point is really that it's high school *level*. If we had someone who was younger but who wanted to join and who could work on the same level, I'm sure that person would be welcome. Occasionally, one of us has a hard time keeping up with the reading because of other activities, but that's OK. I don't think someone would be afraid to admit they hadn't read the book, the way some kids feel in school. It's true that for me, as the leader, I have more of a responsibility to have read the book, to have the film available, to be prepared with questions, and so on, and sometimes that's hard, but I like the responsibility, too. I don't want to let the others down. I try to know as much about the book and the author as possible so that if other people have questions, they can rely on me. ◆

Finding the Right Schedule

Carla Stein of Massachusetts writes:

We have been homeschooling officially for five years now, with three kids ages 10 1/2, 9, and 7, and have tried so many different set-ups that sometimes I have wondered if we will ever find that magic perfect balance between academic freedom and brain-stuffing. What we have right now seems to be working, but I have the feeling that in six months we will again be searching and making changes. I think perhaps that is all part of the process, changing methods as we change and grow and as our kids change and grow.

Our current set-up is this: I made our week a six-day week, Monday through Saturday, and chose two days for each child to be "in school." This means that we work together on things I have planned (with their interests in mind), with no interruptions (all right, almost no interruptions) from the others. Usually we are done by lunch time, but sometimes we have a little more to do after lunch. I take about a half an hour the night before to figure out what would be a good plan. The deal is, when we are done, the kid who had school that day "has" me for the rest of the afternoon. If they need help on some project, or just want to read together, or cook, or whatever, their desires have priority over the other two children's. Quite often the child whose day it is just wants to go off and play, and that's fine too.

I had to really think about who should get what days. I ended up putting Melody on Saturday, as she is the littlest and her stuff doesn't take that long, which makes for a longer afternoon of free time. Tuesday I gave to Ricky, the middle child, as he is usually faster than Kenny, and Tuesday has two interruptions (my violin lesson and Melody's gymnastics class). I reserved the days that we don't have to go out for Kenny, as he seems to have the hardest time. I also arranged it so that the kid who has school does not have kitchen chores that day, although everyone has one cleaning chore other than kitchen chores every day.

We have been using this system for over a month, and so far we are all pretty happy with it. Several nice things have become apparent lately. Even if we are doing something "not fun," it is much easier to get through it on a one-on-one basis. Also, I find that I am much more flexible, partly because I am not stressed out. I am able, for instance, to go through most of the Saxon math orally, instead of expecting them to write it all down as they would in school. We are using an actual math textbook for the first time in five years just to pick up all the loose ends (for instance, I discovered that they didn't know how to tell time with an analog clock, among other things). I find that both boys are pretty good at doing arithmetic in their heads; why should they have to write it down if they can just say it? I can also tell why something may be taking a long time, because we are working closely together, and I can be more sensitive to what might be the problem. I found that with Kenny, for example, he would often be able to tell me some great big long thing, but he could never get it written down because he really did forget it. Once I realized that he wasn't pretending to have forgotten, I let him use a tape recorder to remember it for him. Then he could play it back, stop the tape when he needed to, and write it down. His writing speed and style both improved, as sometimes he would re-word what he heard on the tape before he got it on paper. I don't know if I would have come across this solution if I had been trying to work with all three kids at once.

Another benefit is that since we feel like more of a team now (rather than fighting with each other as we used to under some of our other set-ups), if it turns out that something we're doing causes us to sidetrack into some other subject, it is easier than it used to be for me to let go of the lesson plan completely and delve into that interest. Quite often, the other two children get drawn into the discussion or project (of course this doesn't count as an "interruption"!). We are all getting along so much better, and learning more. Besides this, I am so busy with my student of the day that I leave the others alone. It used to be that I would worry on the "off" days: are they doing anything? I would try to get them involved in something I considered useful, sometimes even telling them they ought to find something more constructive to do than play noisy games and run around. Now they still do their fair share of running around and making noise, but I am too busy to feel worried about it, and I don't nag them at all. Some days "nothing" happens with the children I'm not working with directly, but on as many other days, they get involved in some really neat projects of their own. For example, the boys are having a friendly competition with each other as to who will devise the best working clock out of Legos, spare parts, etc., and the winner will get to have his clock go in the 10-foot tall clock tower Kenny built. All three children have spent hours making detailed polymer clay sea creatures for their "island" in the sun porch, using four or five sources of illustrations to make sure they look just right. Ricky reads to Melody (it's a paying job, $1 an hour), which is good for both of them. Kenny, as usual, spends hours destroying things in the basement and then making things out of the parts, and has even been commissioned by another mom to design and build a special music book holder for her visually impaired son. Both boys are enjoying raking for pay at another friend's house.

Could it be, perhaps, that we have finally found the balance for which we have been searching so long? I can only pray it lasts, and that I can be receptive and flexible enough to let this structure be a help and guide, never allowing its supportive frame-

work to loom over us like the imprisoning bars of a jail cell.

Record-Keeping Ideas

Nancy Mundorf wrote in the Nov./Dec. 1996 issue of the Homebased Learning Society of Alberta newsletter:

Ken Noster is a facilitator with [a local] school board and an experienced homeschooling parent ... and he [recently came to] speak to us at the November HLSA meeting. The topic for his talk was "Record Keeping and Evaluation," a controversial area for home-based educators. ...

The ideas that worked for me were his suggestions on a method of keeping a journal and for having children evaluate their own work. He recommended that rather than recording a daily listing of every activity, you keep a record of significant changes, moments, interactions, and progress in each of the subject areas (you choose them) whenever they happen. For example, last week Lia (my 11-year-old daughter) started searching the bookshelves for something she could read on her own. This was a significant moment because it reflected the progression she has made through several stages: from me reading to her, to reluctant reading, to voracious reading of comic books, to reading portions of chapter books, and finally to independent reading for enjoyment. This is what I want to remember and record.

The other suggestion I have already used is "child self-evaluation." I asked Lia to give me her own thoughts about her progress in our three blended program subject areas as we were required to submit an evaluation. She was able to reflect and express quite accurately her feelings about what she was doing and about her progress. I liked this because she was proud of her accomplishments and it was good to see her own evaluation acting as a motivator, rather than an outside evaluation rating her and comparing her to others.

Ken describes another way to approach self-evaluation. Have the child choose three samples of work in one area (e.g., three pieces of art): one they think is great, one not so great, and one that is so-so. Talk with your child about their choices or have them write down why they chose them, what they liked or disliked, how they would change them next time, etc. This is something that would be useful in a portfolio.

Homeschooling Children with Special Needs

Cindy Gaddis (KY) sent us a copy of a letter she wrote to Henry Lappen, whose letter about his son with Asperger's Syndrome (a form of autism) was published in GWS #114:

After seeking and receiving diagnoses of autism for my two sons back in March and April of 1996, I have had a continuous battle within myself between my new knowledge of learning differences and my original viewpoint on unschooling. ...

I had most wondered and worried about my fourth child, Adam, who is 4 years old now (3 1/2 at diagnosis). He had only a handful of words, screamed a lot, and often seemed oblivious to anything going on around him. Because of my unschooling and parenting philosophies, I reassured myself that he was a strong-willed boy who was doing his own thing at his own pace. Yet something always nagged at me and I always asked anyone who would listen if they observed Adam as lacking. I never sought professional advice, as I didn't tend to trust the insights of professionals. A friend finally mentioned the word autism. Once the word entered my life, my unschooling nature actually was an advantage. I attacked research and knowledge anywhere I could find it. By the time of the diagnosis, I knew more than the child psychiatrist doing the evaluation. I had already narrowed down the choice of therapy I felt was best for Adam. On the autism spectrum, Adam fell on the low end of high-functioning. I have used the Lovaas (behavior modification) method to educate Adam and he has taken off like a rocket!

... Adam made me question my original philosophy. If I were to be

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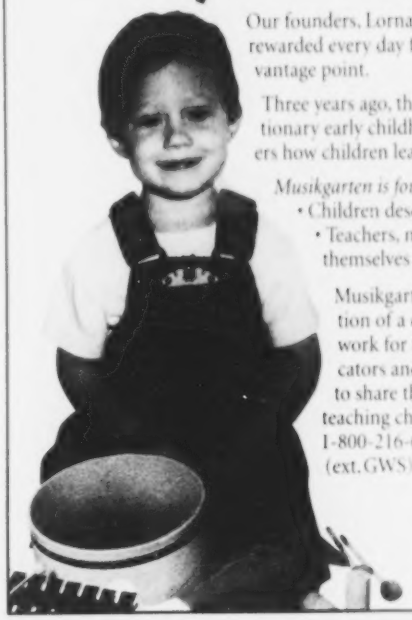

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completely honest, I didn't really know Adam. What did he like? Who was he? I had personally joined the bandwagon of anti-labelers, although I felt I was not naive enough to think there were no such things as helpful labels – I just didn't think they should be so prevalent. And here I was, face to face with not only a developmental label but an educational one that defied some of my most basic unschooling beliefs. So, what did the label "autism" do for my family? It was the key to unlocking the mystery of Adam to me. I found my son! I understand him now. I know how to teach him now. And actively teach him I must – unlike "normally developing" children. This is a fact! Autism does not define Adam; it helps me understand how he learns. What a gift to me to finally know how to understand my own child.

I said two of my children have been diagnosed. At first, I didn't quite think autism described Eli as it so aptly did Adam. I was given some reading material with Asperger's Syndrome described within. Now that sounded like Eli! However, in the end my child psychiatrist felt that Eli fit autism as well so we went with the more in-depth label. Eli has a full vocabulary, but has communication gaps, as I call them. He cannot describe or comprehend directions or instructions well. He has always had very intense interests. It began with trains at a mere 1 1/2 years old. He would spent literally hours with them. Then at 4 he switched to Legos and building materials. At almost 6 today, he can built Legos at a level equivalent to, or higher than, his 10-year-old brother. He once again spends hours with these pursuits. He seems to be teaching himself to read and is a rather gifted artist. Socially and behaviorally, he is "functional," in my opinion. He just can take or leave friends. If he feels like it, he can be social. If he does not feel like being around someone, he has other things to do, obviously. Behaviorally, he has routines, but they are changeable.

I placed Eli in an excellent preschool this year (although he was "school age"), as an environment that would show his behavioral, social, and communicative skills in a very obvious light. It has done what I intended for it to do ... I guess it proved to me that I knew exactly where Eli fell in all areas. But he really does enjoy school. So I begin to question if school wouldn't be good for him, and at the same time he can receive the special services and get daily concentrated "practice." But then, like you, I think of the positive attributes of autism and Eli. I feel that spending a lot of time on his interests – building and drawing – could be developing usable skills that could possibly be brought to an even higher level (we both have heard the Einstein, Van Gogh, etc. stories, I'm sure). He also has an innocence and joy in life that I would not like to see squelched. He seems very capable academically, but he does learn in an unusual way. Eli has to be shown just as much as verbally told because he does not understand half the instructional words used in academics. He has shown a proficiency in math, but everything has to be shown, manipulated, and written. His learning style requires a lot from me physically. I question if I can provide everything he needs, considering I have two older children I homeschool as well as his younger brother who is involved in the intense daily therapy that I train, oversee, and provide. I have not even mentioned that I have a fifth child, Alex, 2 years old now, who exhibits all the early autism signs. Therefore, we are currently seeking evaluation. Cross your fingers for us!

Yet, as you ended up in your letter, we really cannot imagine sending our children to school, for all the original reasons we homeschooled our first two right from the start. However, I cannot deny that I need support. I need to speak with other people who are wrestling with the same questions I am: people who understand autism and unschooling. We are but a small bunch. ...

Another reader wrote to Henry:

My daughter, age 9, also has trouble with "foreign toilets," started sounding out words on her cereal boxes at the age of 2 1/2, reads voraciously (and always aloud), has trouble taking social cues and can't understand why she drives other people crazy with poking, pinching, tattling, lying, bossiness, and incessant chatter. She was diagnosed at age 7 with a learning disability – the kind that means she takes in knowledge through different pathways than most people, and not just that she isn't doing such-and-such when the schools deem it time. It's a label that came as a relief to the whole family, my daughter included.

At her insistence, she tried school three times. The results were pretty negative. At 4 1/2, she got kicked out of preschool for behavior problems; a year later, she had such severe toileting and behavior trouble in kindergarten that the teacher and school psychologist were at their wits' end. We withdrew her and spent the next eight weeks undoing psychological damage. What she had learned in school was that "I am different and different is not OK."

Jane, at age 5, worked on cookie-sharing problems; she eventually wrote one as an infinite series! (see Ch. 2)

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Now, at 9, she has become a mostly pleasant, confident young lady who can use foreign toilets as long as they are of the one-seater variety. She still insists on having me go in with her if it's a stall-type restroom.

We figured out, by trial and error, how her mind best absorbs and retains knowledge, and we brought her up from being in the ninth percentile on math tests to doing above-average work. We also learned by scads of reading that most LD specialists also worked by trial and error since there really is no such thing as a typical LD child. In other words, there was no magic formula that took a master's degree worth of study to apply! That gave us the confidence to keep on homeschooling. In the meantime, learning about and treating food and environmental allergies brought about a vast improvement in temperament and behavior.

This past fall, she wanted to try school again. She was so curious about what her friends did all day and she thought it sounded awfully exciting. She seemed readier than ever, so we talked extensively with the principal and signed her up. It was a disaster. Two hours of play with just a few friends goes well for her. Six hours of constant contact drove her nuts. She couldn't concentrate on her work, her math skills plummeted, her attitude toward reading took a nose dive, and her self-confidence vanished. The learning difficulty was addressed not through special help but through the teacher trying to use humiliation to motivate her to do better. In a classroom of desks pushed together to face each other, my daughter sat at a desk all by herself in a corner, just like the three or four other "bad" kids. When she couldn't concentrate, she got sent to the office – no less distracting an environment than the classroom! – with the result that both she and her classmates thought she was being punished.

Even though she, like Henry's son Jasper, thrives on order and structure (something her father and I can't give her at home), she did so much better at home than in school. In other words, public schooling may not provide all the services you hope for. ... Homeschooling a special needs child is by no means easy, but who knows that child best if not the parents? If teachers are also feeling their way around by trial and error to find out what works, can't a parent do that even better? Of course my husband and I worry about the big picture and how our daughter will turn out, but after these three trials at school, it's obvious that homeschooling will best give her what she needs. Friends within our local circle of homeschoolers express surprise if I mention that our daughter has ever had any kind of unusual trouble with learning or social skills.

After she left school this fall, she hotly declared that she needed a vacation from all academic pursuits. A six-week vacation, like the one recommended in Grace Llewellyn's *Teenage Liberation Handbook*, in which she wouldn't be required to do a single speck of schoolwork. Her dad and I were more than happy to grant it. The first week of her vacation, we celebrated Christmas. By the end of the following week, she had read five novels and made plans to try some projects to help her see what it was like to live in colonial days; she's written scads of letters; she wrote, typed out, stapled, and illustrated a horse story, read an entire adult-level horse-owner's manual and copied out a list of plants toxic to horses. In the spring, she plans to check our yard for these plants before she brings the neighbor's pony over here to let it graze. She has an appointment early next week to finalize plans to volunteer at a local stable; she's studying diagrams for building a horse shed with an eye toward adapting it to house goats and chickens; she checked out a book on raising poultry so she can study up on how to care for the white leghorn hen chick she wants to buy this spring. As if that weren't enough, she also telephoned a nearby daycare provider to inquire about an apprenticeship.

Not bad for a week of "only doing what I want"! I wonder what she'll do when she decides she's had enough vacation. ◆

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Focus

Late Readers Turn Out OK

These two young adults, who are now in college and working, began reading at what many people would consider a later-than-acceptable age. In school, they would almost certainly have been diagnosed with a "reading problem." But as these interviews show, learning to read at 10 or 11 doesn't handicap a child or preclude any future opportunities.

When One Sister Reads Earlier and the Other Reads Later

Emily Bergson-Shilcock (PA) runs a store called The Destination of Independence, which sells products for people with disabilities (see GWS #106), and, at the time of this interview, she was four months short of her 19th birthday and was completing her first semester at Beaver College.

When would you say you began reading?

I was right around 5 or 6 when I began reading words, signs, stuff like that. It wasn't hard for me to figure out words, but my major gap was between that and actually sitting down to read books. That gap lasted from about age 6 to age 9. I wasn't really interested in reading, so I didn't spend time doing it – and of course, the more you don't do it, the more you think, "I'm not great at that, so why bother?" But I don't remember a time of actually *learning* to read. I just remember that then, at a certain point, I could read. That was at about 9 or 10.

During those earlier years, did you ever feel any frustration or pressure about not being able to read?

I'm not aware of ever thinking that I couldn't read as well as my peers, although I know that I got frustrated because my older sister had started reading when she was about 3 or 4, and also because it seemed to me that reading was one of the things my parents pushed me on. Maybe they felt that since I could read somewhat, I should just be spending more time to get better at it. With my younger siblings, they got more relaxed – my younger brother started reading at 8, and by 10 he was reading everything, and I don't remember my parents worrying about him. But in my case, I think the one thing I did feel frustrated about was that my parents seemed to think I should be able to read. They took me to an optometrist, which I have to admit was one of the worst experiences. He seemed to think that my eyes didn't team together well, and I don't know if that was true or not, but he had me do all these exercises that I hated. He would show you 30 numbers on a screen and then cover them up, and you had to go chalk them in. He never told me that most people get only 6 right! I thought I should get all 30 right. I think that experience was one of the few things that made me think there *was* something wrong with not being able to pick up an encyclopedia like my sister did.

Other than that, I don't remember too much pressure from other people. My best friend at the time was learning to read just when I was, so we were in the same boat and didn't feel a lot of pressure from each other. And although I felt frustrated because my sister read so well, she didn't

make fun of me about my reading or make me feel as if I should be like she was. My cousin is 10 now and is constantly harassed for not being able to read. His older brothers always make fun of him. I always used to defend him, especially when he was younger, and I remember thinking, "Gosh, I'm glad people never made fun of me like that!" I don't remember being publicly humiliated at all. I can only guess what my relatives may have thought, but if they worried about it to my parents, my parents never told me about it, and I think that's good.

Some older readers have told us that they get frustrated at not being able to read the menu in a restaurant, or in other situations like that where the frustration is coming from the experience itself, not from anyone's expectations. Did you ever feel that?

Well, as I said, as far as I can remember I *could* read a lot of words at that time, so it wasn't so much that I was late in *starting* learning to read. My gap was between starting and finishing – between being able to read some words and being able to read everything else. So I guess I might have been frustrated that I couldn't sit down and read an entire book, but I honestly don't remember actually wanting to do that anyway! Maybe if I still couldn't read when I was 11 or 12 and going out with my friends and having the subject of reading come up more, I might have minded it more then.

What other things were you spending time on during those years?

A lot of things. I think my parents were great about making a lot of different opportunities available to me that were in different categories, other than reading. We volunteered at a home for crippled children, and I really liked that. I remember feeling really helpful there; we felt like we were making a difference. And then when my sister and I were 9 and 7, we volunteered at our local watershed association, doing creek testing and helping with mailings, addressing labels. And even when I couldn't read, the people we worked for were always saying, "You're so smart," so I'm sure that had an effect, that I felt smart even though I wasn't reading. And I felt responsible – I knew that not many 7-year-olds would be responsible enough to do a job like stuffing envelopes, and I think having a chance to be responsible was one of the aspects of my life that made a difference. That's still true today – people associate being responsible with being smart.

How does that come up today for you?

At college, I'm taking Psychology, History, English, and an art seminar, so obviously I have to do a lot of reading. I found that basically I'm the only one in my English class who does the reading! The others say, "If you don't get called on, you can get away with not doing the reading," and I say, "But what if you do get called on?" I'm the type of person that, if I see it says on the syllabus that we're supposed to do this, I do it. So then I'm always the first one who raises my hand in class. I have a lot more interest in learning, and I really can't blame the other students, because they've been in schools all their lives and they're burned out, or they're so used to thinking about what they can get away with. They're just interested in getting through, it seems like.

So having been a late reader isn't causing a problem now ...

Right now, I don't even look at myself and say, "I was a late reader." It doesn't play into anything in my life now; I don't have any trouble regarding reading now.

Going back for a minute, what happened after you began reading at 9 or 10? What did you read after that?

I don't remember reading little kids' books, but I remember loving the "Choose Your Own Adventure" series, because I thought it was so neat that they could write a book that way. And if I wanted to know something that was in a book, I definitely felt like I could go and look it up. When I was 16 and wanted to buy a car, I really needed to be able to go out and get lots of books to research what kind of car to buy, and that motivated me to do something I didn't ordinarily like to do: go to the library. I did it in that situation because I really wanted to. The next year, when I was planning to open my store, I had to do a lot of reading. I read *Business Week*, I read tax information, I read a lot of legal books about incorporating your business. I remember going to the library and spending hours and hours researching products and companies and manufacturers, and after that, I really had a positive association with the library, because I began to think: this is where I go to find *my* information. And then opening my business helped me build up a ton of confidence about myself, so that I ended up thinking, "Well, if I've done this, I can certainly do college."

Right now, I don't even look at myself and say, "I was a late reader." It doesn't play into anything in my life now; I don't have any trouble regarding reading now.

When you decided that, did you do any kind of preparation that was specifically for college, like practicing reading books or writing papers for a deadline, for example?

I had taken one course at a junior college when I was 16, and that built up my confidence too, because I saw that being responsible pays. Even if you go into a situation

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where you're at a disadvantage, maybe because everybody else has already covered the subject before and you haven't, if you just put your time in and work at it, you'll be fine because so many people don't even do that. When I went to Beaver College, I honestly hadn't written many papers for deadlines, but I had met many deadlines for my store. I think I did well because I had my own internal motivation and because I've been brought up to do what's right and what's expected in a situation – well, not unconditionally, but I mean, as long as it feels right. So I've learned that if there's anything I decide I'm going to do, I can do it. I got an A on my first English paper, and then everyone on the hall in my dorm started saying, "Oh, Emily, will you read my English paper, will you proofread

My parents made opportunities available to me that had nothing to do with reading, so I could see that I was good at other things.

it?" My friend across the hall does that, and her mother always compares her to me, in a way that is so negative about her, which I can't stand. But I've seen that so many students have fallen apart since we've gotten here because they really aren't internally motivated. They get distracted by other things so easily. I've always known this about myself, that if I don't feel pressure, I do a better job. I hate having things hang over my head. So now, the night before a paper is due, I'm walking around eating ice cream while everyone else is cramming, because I've gotten it done already.

Is there anything families can do to make it easier for an older reader? I'm thinking especially of what you said about feeling frustrated because your sister could read so well ...

I always used to joke to her, because she was so much the other way – loving to read, and working at the library since she was 13 – that I wouldn't be caught dead in a library. There was no way I was ever going to surpass her in that area, and nobody wants to be second, or at least I didn't, so it's natural that you pick something else that *you're* successful at doing...

That's what I was thinking about, that sometimes the accident of birth order and of different temperaments, which you can't control, affects things like this. So what can parents do in that situation?

Never even touch on the subject of there being a wrong time to read, or a late time. And don't compare the children. My parents always said, "Everybody's their own person, and there are things you can do that your sister can't do as well." As I said before, they made opportunities available to me that had nothing to do with reading, so I could see that I was good at other things. And they never stereotyped me. They never said, "Emily isn't a reader." That might have been my idea sometimes, but it still makes a big difference if the parents say it or don't. If other people stereotype you, it's much harder to change. If you leave yourself open to growing and changing, it's much easier.

Don't Worry About the Reading Part

19-year-old Luke Evans (MI) is an active member of Civil Air Patrol and at the time of this interview he had just completed his first semester as a full-time student at Washtenaw Community College.

When did you begin reading as a child?

I don't have specific memories of being a nonreader and then being a reader. I recall working hard to read the information I needed for advancement in my Boy Scout Handbook when I was 11 1/2 or 12. But even then it was usually easier to just ask people when I needed information. My mom recalls that the first reading I did for pleasure was one of my dad's Star Trek novels at about this same time.

When you were younger and not yet reading, or not yet reading fluently, did you ever feel any frustration, or pressure from relatives or friends or just the situation itself?

In Boy Scouts, it was difficult at some of our Patrol Leader meetings if there were handouts with information that we were expected to understand only from reading them. Usually, though, people gave oral explanations of anything they had written out. Ceremonies were scary sometimes, if I were handed a paper to read aloud. But these readings were based on common Boy Scout phrases and sayings, so I could usually use what I had already memorized. It wasn't difficult to find someone to go over what the paper said, and then I just had to remember the big words so that I would say them right during the ceremony.

As time went on, more and more merit badges required more reading, but I could read well enough within a year or two, so that was never a problem.

A homeschooling friend and I used to write messages to one another using codes – Morse code, "Pigpen," and several other codes we found or made up. This was when I was 12 or 13. I don't remember having any trouble figuring out what my friend was sending me. I used invented spellings, and he seemed to be able to figure out my messages okay.

It sounds like you weren't frustrated too much of the time, but when you were occasionally frustrated or nervous as you describe, what helped you to deal with that? What supports did you have?

My parents didn't make a big deal out of whether or not I was reading, and no one else seemed to either. My father read to me constantly when I was younger, both fiction and nonfiction. Every night, we would choose books and he would read to my brother and sister and me for hours. Sometimes, I would lie next to them listening, but more often, I would be building with Legos or drawing while he was reading.

One thing that saved me with the adult Boy Scout leaders was that I was good at knots and other camping skills. No one seemed to notice or care that I wasn't reading, they just kept teaching me new knots and asking me to teach them other knots I knew. Since I was really good at camping skills and those sorts of things, people interacted with me on the basis of my strengths, not focusing on what they might have thought of as a weakness.

What other interests did you have as a child, instead of reading?

Lots of things. I built a lot of ships out of Legos. When I got bored with their designs, I built my own and then drew out instructions trying to copy their technique. We moved to a small farm when I was 6, and I was the one who got to feed the animals and carry endless buckets of water. (In the dead of winter, uphill both ways, no shoes, wearing short sleeved shirts!) We raised goats, rabbits, chickens, turkeys, geese, and sheep at various times. My brother and I made a couple of forts with other kids in the neighborhood, caught frogs in the pond, and dug foxholes for paint ball battles.

Boy Scouts and Civil Air Patrol provided trips to go camping, learn survival skills, and teach search and rescue techniques. I did my share of playing Atari, Nintendo, and computer war games, role playing, and adventure or quest games.

What are you involved in now, at 19? How comfortable do you feel with the reading you have to do?

I completed my Eagle requirements in Boy Scouts two years ago, and have been less active in that organization as I've put more time and energy into Civil Air Patrol activities. I've had an opportunity to participate in national training activities in New Mexico, Colorado, Texas, Kentucky and Pennsylvania. These have included Search and Rescue training, a look at undergraduate pilot training, introductions to the Air Force and national space command programs. I've organized and led week-long Search and Rescue training here in Michigan and participated on staff for our summer encampments for the past five years.

When I turned 18, I started taking classes part time at the local Community College. I enjoyed the three semesters of writing classes I've taken, along with two semesters of Spanish and Physics and math. I got mostly A's in these classes, and found them interesting. What's been interesting about the writing classes is that they haven't taught me too much about writing, but by giving me a regular schedule of having to produce writing, they've helped me become more comfortable about expressing myself on paper. This semester, I'll be taking philosophy, comparative religions, Spanish, and history. I don't feel like I'm at any disadvantage compared to what the other students seem to know. In fact, it's surprising sometimes to see how much they don't know about what I regard as common knowledge.

Most of the reading I do for pleasure has been from Tolkien's Middle Earth books, and my sister's Shakespeare plays. I enjoy reading all types of science fiction and fantasy, too. My father read us the entire Narnia and Madeleine L'Engle series when I was little.

Did you do anything in particular to prepare for college?

No one seemed to notice or care that I wasn't reading ... People interacted with me on the basis of my strengths, not focusing on what they might have thought of as a weakness.

I didn't really do anything specifically labeled "preparing for college," just kept doing what I had been doing for the past 12 years or so since my mother decided we would call ourselves homeschoolers. As I said, I did start out part time, to get up to speed with institutional learning. I didn't find any problems with the transition from learning on my own to going to classes and having someone instruct me. Then, I started going to college full time because in order to maintain my health insurance on my father's policy, I needed to be enrolled full time in college once I turned 19.

Finally, what would you like to say to parents of kids who are not reading yet, especially parents who are worried about it? How do you think parents should act in this situation – what helps, and what gets in the way?

I would tell them not to worry about the reading part so much. If they are finding things their child likes to do that are mentally challenging and he's spending time thinking through things that interest him, he'll probably start reading when he's ready, or when he wants to get at information that is only available in written form.

Parents could spend their energy more efficiently by continuing to read things to their child, or help him find other ways to get information, rather than by trying to push him to read before he's ready, or before he decides he wants to. ◆

Thoughts from a
Stay-at-Home Father

Charles Numrich of Minnesota writes:

"Papa, will you make chocolate-chip cookies now?" It's 7:30 in the morning; their mother left for work over an hour ago and my two sons are ready to start the day.

"It's time for breakfast, boys," I say.

"We can have cookies for breakfast!"

"We'll make cookies later and have them after lunch."

This is not how we start every day, but it happens often enough for the respones to be a ritual part of our life together. I grew up watching my mother bake the staples and treats for our family and my sons now assume their father will provide them with delicious things from the oven – maybe not on command at 7:30 A.M. but with regularity and with joy.

Right now I am the primary caregiver for our two boys, ages 11 and 9, who are in their third year of homeschooling. I have taken on these responsibilities by choice, and I love it. My wife works full time and she loves it too. At 49, I wouldn't exactly say I am the envy of my peers, but they are respectful – perhaps in the way one is respectful of a peculiar type of madness. "I couldn't do what you do," friends often comment, but then most of their children are in college or beyond. Mine would be, too, if I'd had children when my friends did, but at 20 or 25, it wouldn't have occurred to me that I could be a good father, much less a full-time father. Now it is hard for me to consider being anything else.

This is at least the third time in our 15-year marriage that my wife and I have shared and juggled our at-home responsibilities. When our first child was born, my wife got a three-month maternity leave. When she returned to her nursing job, my work allowed me the freedom to remain the primary at-home parent for over a year. That experience helped us come to the firm conclusion that we would do whatever was necessary to make sure that one of us was always the primary caregiver for our children. This decision has made for some hard times financially and some strain personally, but it has been absolutely the most positive, important choice we have ever made.

I became the primary at-home parent again when our second child was 2. Now I have the opportunity again because of a career possibility that came up for my wife and because of my need to back away from my work load as director of a non-profit arts organization.

In GWS #113, fathers discussed the question of why some men shy away from homeschooling. My first experiences with my children led me to the conclusion that whatever philosophical or social reasons men might have for not supporting the homeschooling choice, the key to the issue is relational. The nights after both my children were born, I slept in the hospital bed with my wife, with the baby on my chest. That bond has been reinforced each time I have had the chance to be the primary at-home parent, and the relationships I have built with my sons are the foundations that allow me to trust the home-schooling process, even when I am not directly involved. I think that a lack of involvement is often part of a parent's difficulty with homeschooling. I have found that since my wife returned to work, she at times starts to question the homeschooling process, in many of the same ways that working fathers do. It is not gender that matters so much as proximity and involvement.

Men who are not an integral part of the homeschooling process distrust it at different levels, for various reasons, but most of that distrust is based on lack of relationship. My experience with the Hmong (South-east Asian) refugee community in the U.S. has directly supported this theory. The Hmong culture is a very ancient one, traced back as far as 10,000 years by some scholars. The Hmong people did not have formal education as part of their traditional culture. They were farmers, hunters, and herders. In my discussions with the Hmong parents in the U.S., we have often talked about the differences in teaching styles that Hmong youth face in this culture. Traditional teaching in the Hmong community was side by side. A mother sat with her child next to her and showed the various stitches necessary to create some of the most exquisite needlework in the world. A father

stood with his child in the fields and showed how to plant, nurture, and harvest crops. As they looked out across the landscape of their world, parents told stories to their children to explain why things are the way they are. This is a type of education that relies almost entirely on the personal relationship between parent and child.

In the culture of most U.S. education, teaching takes place face to face. The teacher stands in front of seated students, tells them what to do and how, and then checks back later to make sure it is being done correctly. This is a very different kind of relationship. The Hmong culture continues to struggle with a loss of the deep sense of respect between children and their parents, and many trace this loss to the lack of respect that their children learn or experience in schools.

In much the same way, I feel, parents who are not a part of the everyday, ongoing relationships that are essential to successful homeschooling might begin to miss the important nuances that create good learning. When they do not see or hear about direct transmission of information from teacher to student, they may doubt if anything is happening. When they hear about the "soft," "fuzzy" experiences of reading a book together or watching the first snowfall or visiting with neighbors, they might not understand the kind of invaluable learning that happens when a parent and a child experience the world side by side.

Relationships between fathers and sons are as odd, difficult, touching, and creative as the people in them. I spent most of my adult life, through one marriage and well into a second, fearful of becoming a father because of my father. Friends and brothers told me over and over, "You'll understand him better when you have kids of your own." Somehow that didn't ring true. I felt (and feel) that I understood him quite well from an early age. When I finally gathered the courage (with the help of my wife) to have children, I began to understand something else. I had somehow been convinced that the way to be a father was to look back at my father. When I met my first son, cut his umbilical cord and slept that first night with him on my chest, I discovered that my vision had to change direction. I had to look forward, not back. I needed to build a new relationship, not try to repeat or redo an old one. Whether I respected, understood, or even liked my own father is irrelevant to the fact that I now have two children I need to father. This change of direction has made it possible for me to see parenting as a challenge of the future, not an ongoing battle with the past. Whatever my parents were like, it is my children who give me opportunities for good parenting.

Certainly baking, cleaning, cooking, and doing the laundry don't make a good parent; I do these things because I like to. Being a good parent requires many attributes, including a clear perspective on needs. Our children are our future and our perspective has to be future-directed. Every day I ask, "What will help my children cope with the world?" Often, the answer is frightening, frustrating, or unimaginable. But on a day-to-day basis, we can begin to form goals and work toward them, and to determine what is basic for us and then keep our focus on that. I find the answer in staying home with the children, limiting our income (and of course expenses), and helping them see life as a challenge we face together. I also find the answer in developing as many ways as possible to include my children in my professional life. As a storyteller, this has been easy. I have always told my children stories. As they have grown up, I have found ways to include them in theatre programs and workshops that I offer. One of our most enjoyable activities is to grab the video camera and create films, involving creative collaboration, story boarding, script development, filming and in-camera edits in the space of two or three hours that could have been one of those "there's nothing to do" type of evenings.

"Sacrifice" is how my mother would have described what I'm doing now; my father would have called it just plain stupid. I can no longer look back at their definitions. To lay groundwork for our children's future, we make choices and changes in response to our own upbringing. Giving our children stable, loving relationships at home will benefit them, whatever kind of world they must cope with. The fact that I love being home with them benefits me as well, not least because I too enjoy freshly baked chocolate chip cookies for breakfast once in a while. ◆

Resources for Fathers

Full-Time Dads (an online magazine; no longer available in print form),
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At-Home Dad (newsletter)
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I spent most of my adult life fearful of becoming a father because of my father. When I met my first son, I discovered that my vision had to change direction. I had to look forward, not back.

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Watching Children Learn

Naughty and Disgusting Math

Phoebe Wells (MA) writes:

Our family enjoyed both Carla Stein's (GWS #110) and Susan Axe-Bronk's (GWS #112) descriptions of their families' math adventures. We too have found that the real math of our lives and the things we love is the best way to enjoy numbers. For us, math is either a game or another way of understanding something or both.

We first noticed Eoin's interest in numbers when he was 4 and immersed in the details of Custer's Last Stand. What was the average number of braves per Native American chief? And how did that compare to the number of soldiers in Custer's troops? Even after Eoin had his fill of this subject, he was still hungry for more math challenges (he never liked the term "math problem," because it doesn't sound fun at all). However, at the time, I was still in that bleary postpartum stage after the birth of my second child, Daire, as well as coping with a family crisis or two, so I was not at my creative best. I tried to think up interesting scenarios for 5-year-old Eoin about dividing up oranges and sharing toys, but I'll be the first to admit they were pretty dull. Still Eoin pleaded for more, so finally in a desperate moment I thought up a gem based on recent experience: if Eoin has stomach flu and throws up 6 times in one night but only makes it to the bathroom 2/3 of the time, how many times did Mama need to change the sheets? Eoin was delighted, and "disgusting math" was born.

Life with an infant offered plenty of real-life situations which we examined in this mathematical fashion, and as Daire grew, his increasing abilities presented more food for thought. This became fondly known as "naughty baby math": if we give Daire 10 banana slices for lunch and he flings 2/5 of them on the floor and smooshes another 1/5 in his hair, how many did he actually eat?

Eoin's mathematical abilities flourished in this environment, and we moved on to improper fractions, decimals, and percents. For example, if Eoin has just helped his exhausted mother by folding 40 diapers into a nice, neat pile and Daire toddles over and scatters 50% onto the floor and throws another 10% behind the couch, how many diapers must Eoin retrieve and refold? Time and motion studies were popular as well: if Eoin has just built a huge block tower in the living room and Daire spots it from the kitchen and begins crawling toward it at a rate of 10 inches per second, how long does Eoin have to kiss his creation goodbye?

To be fair, this wasn't the only math Eoin chose to do. When the World Cup played here, Eoin discovered the tremendous amount of numbers in sports. What fraction of the total number of teams playing in the Cup would make it to the finals? Based on its record, what are a particular team's chances of winning, compared to its opponent's? At 9, Eoin has now branched out to other sports and loves all the statistics involved.

We've also been delighted to find a variety of books at the library that showed the kids more ways to play around with numbers and mathematical ideas. Some picture books we enjoyed are *Remainder of One*, by Elinor Pinczes (about division), *Sea Squares*, by Joy Hulme (about square numbers), *The Rajah's Rice*, by David Barry (about doubling numbers), and *The Tangram's Magician*, by Lisa Campbell Ernst (about tangram puzzles). Eoin also liked The Young Math Book series, especially *Estimation*, by Charles Linn and *Base Five*, by David Adler. Daire's favorite, when he was old enough, was *Angles are Easy as Pie*, by Robert Froman. Recently, Eoin has been inspired by *Math Equals: Biographies of Women Mathematicians and Related Activities*, by Teri Perl. Specifically, he was interested in the number patterns that inspired Ada Byron Lovelace, who became the world's first computer programmer in 1843.

At 9 and 4, now, the boys keep discovering more ways to enjoy numbers (it's geography and Cuisenaire rods at the moment), but still they request and rejoice in new "disgusting/naughty math" that reflects our present lives: if Eoin and Daire persisted in playing a wild game of soccer in the living room even though Mama told them 20 times in one afternoon to tone it down, and someone got hurt 1/4 of those times, how many times did Mama snap, "I told you so"?

Analyzing Newspaper Coverage

Stephanie Judy (BC) writes:

We enjoyed reading about the M&M study reported by Sue Smith-Heavenrich in GWS #112. Our family is also involved in a statistical study, and when we read Sue's letter, we wondered if other GWS families might be interested in helping us.

We live in a mountainous, rural area in southeastern British Columbia. This is also a very "artsy" area, with lots of activities in classical music and musical theater. For several years, local performing artists have felt frustrated by the poor coverage of performing arts in our local daily newspaper. Our impression is that sports are covered in a timely and thorough way by the paper's salaried staff, while the

performing arts are covered infrequently, and almost never by a paid writer.

My teenage daughter, Tessa Walker, is a serious violinist and a lifelong unschooler. Tessa and I decided to see if we were correct in believing that the paper covers sports well but neglects the arts. We designed a system for monitoring and analyzing the paper's contents. Our paper is small – about 12-20 pages each day – so it is feasible for us to do this on a daily basis.

So far, we have found that sports get by far the highest number of column inches of any topic in our local paper. About 22% of an average week's content space is devoted to sports, while less than 4% is devoted to the arts. We have also found that over 80% of the sports content is devoted to competitive sports.

By monitoring sources of display advertising, we have found that the arts account for 4% of the paper's ad space, but that sports account for only 2.4% of ad space (and competitive sports for close to 0% – most sports advertising is from non-competitive and recreational sources).

We would like to compare our paper's pattern of coverage and advertising to the pattern found in other small communities. We would like to get in touch with other homeschooling families who would be willing to monitor their local daily news-paper for at least two consecutive weeks, counting and measuring both content and advertising in sports and arts.

If this sounds like an interesting project for your family, please write to us first. We'll send you the guidelines we're using so that your data are compatible with ours.

Our purpose is not to argue for less sports coverage, but for more arts coverage. I would especially like to see young artists in our community getting as much visibility and recognition as young athletes. In fact, since coming up with this idea, we've amended it to include the question, "What kinds of young people's activities are covered in the newspaper?" We added this after having a wonderful conversation with the Executive Director of the B.C. Press Council (a citizens' and journalists' media watchdog organization). He was extremely enthusiastic about our project, and particularly about the idea that we might get some comparative data from other locales. He said he'd be interested in publishing the results of our study in the Press Council's quarterly newsletter when we finish our work, so if you participate, you might have the opportunity to be part of a published study. This man suggested that we expand our study to include data about how young people are presented in the media. The data that we have gathered already accommodates this question, and – whaddaya know – 91% of our local daily's coverage that includes young people is about competitive sports.

If your family wants to participate, please write to Stephanie Judy and Tessa Walker, #2 Press Rd, Argenta, BC Canada V0G 1B0.

[SS:] And please let GWS know, as well, if your family enjoys this chance to do some real-world math. Maybe Stephanie and Tessa's study can give you some ideas for other projects that connect to your own interests and concerns.

How Much Parental Involvement

Dori Griffin of Tennessee sent us a copy of a presentation she gave at a meeting of a local homeschoolers' group. Dori is 16 and has been homeschooling all her life except for three years at a private school. From her presentation:

... I've just written a short story called "Swan Song." It's a fairy tale of sorts. For months now I've been reading both traditional and original fairy tales by many authors of fantasy. ... I didn't limit my reading to renditions of Swan Lake, the story I based my tale on. I read versions of Cinderella, The Twelve Dancing Princesses, Saint George and the Dragon, and then original fairy tales that aren't really related to any classic story. Then I listed all the traditional fairy tales I could think of. Swan Lake sparked an idea in my mind, and so I wrote a story that really came out nothing like the original tale: in my story, the enchanted girl rescues herself from the Faery enchanter's spell.

... One point I consider very im-

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about some projects I want to do, and it takes me a month to finish those projects to my satisfaction, then it's a month before we really discuss anything else. If an idea only takes a few days for me to complete, then I might confer with her again after a short amount of time. Sometimes, I'm knee-deep in whatever I'm doing before I ever get around to telling her about it. For instance, I didn't say "I'm studying fairy tales these days" until I sat down to write my list of traditional stories – at least a month into the project.

This isn't to say that Mom was in the dark for an entire month as to what I was doing; there were other things we'd discussed – art history, for example. And from the stacks of books I brought home from the library each week, it was obvious I was reading fairy tales. But since I considered it a part of my writing and research, I didn't classify it as anything really related to school. Usually, I'll do a project first and then think about its educational value later. Sometimes Mom points out to me that what I've been working on counts as "school."

portant [in explaining my homeschooling] is the fact that I'm not simply floating around doing whatever strikes my fancy. My mom isn't uninvolved in my education. True, she doesn't outright teach me when it comes to school. But we work together. I keep her up-to-date on what I'm doing. We discuss my ideas, and her ideas. I tell her what I'm planning on doing in the near future. This, just like the other aspects of my education, is not exactly conducted in the traditional method. If Mom and I talk

Education vs. Entertainment

Jan Hunt (BC) writes:

A recent article in "USA Today Online" described a new U.S. law that will take effect next year, requiring all television stations to show a minimum of three hours of "educational and informative" television each day, suitable for viewers 16 and younger. The article quotes readers' viewpoints on the definition of "educational and informative." One show that brought about disagreement among readers was "I Love Lucy," a favorite of mine. In fact, I learned about this law from the "I Love Lucy" email forum I subscribe to.

The view of many adult panelists was expressed by a Detroit reader: "While some of life's valuable lessons may be included in shows designed primarily for entertainment, that does not qualify them as educational. Education can be fun, but it is a disciplined activity. 'I Love Lucy' just doesn't fit the bill."

The children who wrote to USA Today took a different view, pointing out that "I Love Lucy" teaches valuable lessons about the consequences of one's actions. They saw Lucy Ricardo, whose escapades often backfire, as a reverse role model, and the show as something of a morality play. This is an intriguing perspective, because Shakespeare's plays developed from the comic characters in morality plays, and his theatrical productions, written for audiences of a broad social background, were the "popular entertainment" of the day. As author-historian Frank Wadsworth noted in his World Book entry on Shakespeare, "Most of the Globe [theatre]'s audience consisted of middle-class citizens, such as merchants and craftsmen and their wives. They went to the theatre for the same reasons most people today go to the movies – to relax and to escape a while from their cares"

Clearly, Shakespeare's plays were written with the intention of entertaining a mass audience, just as many television sitcoms and dramas are written now. At the time they were written, his plays were definitely not considered educational and informative, nor would they have fit the bill as a disciplined activity. It was only from a later perspective that Shakespeare's plays were seen as educational. In his day, there was even some criticism of Shakespeare as an actor-turned-writer, uneducated in traditional theatrical production. Had television been invented in Elizabethan times, it does not seem too far-fetched to imagine that *Hamlet* would have been one of the early shows, criticized for its violence and passion. Today, of course, Shakespeare's plays are considered a required part of a "disciplined educa-

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tion," with the unfortunate result of dissuading many students from enjoying the pleasures of his works.

Obviously, the determination of whether a product or experience is educational changes over time. Eventually, any show can provide "educational and informative" material and food for thought on the thinking, fashions, roles, and lifestyles of its time. Indeed, shows like "I Love Lucy" are currently included in university courses on American cultural history.

As a writer on parenting issues, I am impressed with the way parenting is presented on "I Love Lucy." Little Ricky is consistently treated with more love, kindness, and patience than is depicted in most current television "families." From my perspective, nothing is more educational than that which promotes and models empathic parenting skills, especially as this crucial subject is not included in most school curricula.

My son, now 15, believes he has learned a great deal from this show. Here are the subjects of some of our conversations about the show: that a good show requires skilled writers, that talented actors can improvise some of the best moments in a show, that most of the currently produced shows are more violent, less consistent in quality, and more poorly written, that persistence (such as Lucy insisting that Desi be her co-star) can bring about success, that smoking was common in the 1950s and not well understood, that marital roles have changed over the decades, that an actor's personal life may be very different from the role he plays, that if you look into history you can sometimes discover where social changes may have been introduced (such as the three episodes in which Little Ricky is permitted to join his parents in bed when he needs emotional support), that even loving couples may not be able to sustain a marriage ... I could go on and on. The indisputable point is that children are born with an insatiable curiosity. As long as we trust this process and avoid destroying their curiosity through doubts and fears and arbitrary, stuffy definitions of what is educational and what is not, a child will continue to learn from every experience he has. Any arbitrary division of the child's experiences into "entertainment" and "education" is inaccurate, misleading, and ultimately harmful.

We do a real disservice when we teach a child that only some things are educational, meaning dull, difficult, serious, for their own good, and something they would never want to study on their own. Children receive the unintended but unavoidable message that the educational topic being presented must be difficult and dull, otherwise why is it being forced on them? Perhaps the most non-educational thing we can do is to convince children that "education" must be equated with "dreariness." Children know intuitively that learning should be enjoyable. With this definition, "I Love Lucy" certainly "fits the bill" in our house.

It may be that more people enjoyed Shakespeare's work when they were told it was entertainment than they do now that they are told it is education. Let us hope the same thing never happens to Lucy. ◆

A Passage...

"Chani's Journey:
Home schooling was a logical complement to our daughter Chani's hands-on learning in the natural and social environment in which she was raised, in rural Ecuador, many hours walk from the nearest road.

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My Parents —by Chani West-Foyle

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For more information contact Katherine Jacobsen or Deborah Ferbrache, Olney Friends School, 61830 Sandy Ridge Road, Barnesville, Ohio 43713 614/425-3655 Fax 614/425-3202.

Additions to Directory

Here are the additions and changes that have come in since our last issue. Our complete 1997 Directory was published in GWS #114.

Within each state, families are listed in zip code order, so that readers can find others in their area or travelers can find hosts in a particular region. If you're looking for a particular family by name rather than by region, skim the list of last names, which are printed in all-capital letters.

Our Directory is not a list of all subscribers, but only of those *who ask to be listed*, so that other GWS readers, or other interested people, may get in touch with them. If you would like to be included, please send the entry form or a 3x5 card (one family per card). Please take care to include all the information - last name, full address, and so on. Tell us if you would rather have your phone number and town listed instead of your mailing address (we don't have space to list both).

If a Directory listing is followed by a **(H)**, the family is willing to host GWS travelers who make advance arrangements in writing.

If a name in a GWS story is followed by a state abbreviation in parentheses (e.g. "Jane Goldstein (MA) writes...") that person is in the Directory. If the name is followed by the entire state name (e.g. "Jane Goldstein of Massachusetts writes...") then that person is not in the Directory. We are happy to forward mail to those whose addresses are *not* in the Directory. If you want us to forward the letter without reading it, mark the *outside* of the envelope with writer's name/description and the issue number. If you want us to read the letter and then forward it, please enclose another stamped envelope.

When you send us an address change for a subscription, please remind us if you are in the Directory, so we can change it here, too.

Please remember that we can't control how the Directory is used. If you receive unwanted mail as a result of being listed, just toss it out or recycle it.

CA, North (zips 94000 & up) — Nina & Bruce SUTCLIFFE (Tanner/93) 20115 Gold Flat Ct, Middletown 95461 ••• Steve & Pat GRAVER (Allison/79, Andrea/83, Nathan/84, Erin/86) 1243 Los Robles Ct, Vacaville 95687 ••• Lynn BROWN (Chris/85) Learning Naturally, PO Box 5759, Shasta Lake 96089-5759 **(H)** ••• Hillary & Stew BITTMAN (Arielle/88) PO Box 11435, 1721 Delaware, S Lake Tahoe 96155 **(H)**

CO — Barbara & Marc SNYDER (Aaron/87, Zachary/90) 19395 Greenwood Dr, Monument 80132 **(H)** ••• Irene & Matt ARNDT (Lydia/88, Spencer/88) 517 Potter Cir, Colorado Springs 80909 **(H)** ••• Terri BLESSMAN ('90 & '95) 165 Vega Rd, Walsenburg 81089 ••• Ann & Gig LEADBETTER (Kate/87, Molly/89) 2440 Santa Rosa Ln, Grand Junction 81503 **(H)**

CT — Stephen & Kathleen PASAKARNIS (Tim/81, Chris/86) 98 Woodland Dr, S Windsor 06074 **(H)**

FL — Debby PASTERNACK (Jenna/84, Marla/86, Dana/90) 15830 113 Tr N, Jupiter Farms 33478

GA — Beth & Robert MOORE (Nate, Tyler, Caleb/92) 5060 Bayberry Ct, Cumming 30130

IL — Diane & Andy BLACK (Michael/88, Margaret/90) 3752 N Lawndale, Chicago 60618 (change) **(H)**

IN — Mary BERGHOFF & Neil MEYER (Jason/82) 8708 Seiler Rd, New Haven 46774 **(H)** ••• John & Debbie HARBESON (Melissa/83, Keith/85) 305 Deer Run Dr, Sellersburg 47172 ••• Mark & Alesha REEVES (Colt/85, Lindy/87, Cody/89, Kellen/92) 2280 W 1000 N, Perrysville 47974

IA — Jeanne & Michael SCHOONOVER (Carolie/90, Madelyn/92) 392 Gear St, Norwalk 50211

KY — Laura & Michael O'CONNELL (Elijah/92, Wiley/95) 2840 N Middletown Rd, Paris 40361

ME — Chris & Patti HAMILTON (Rebecca/90, Abraham/92) Parker Head Rd, Phippsburg 04562 **(H)** ••• Jeff & Ellen STANCLIFT (Joshua/92, Caroline/94) 10 Norumbega Dr, Camden 04843

MA — Denise MANDEVILLE & Kevin MAHONEY (Kyle/92, Cassidy/94) 22 Southwest Cutoff, Northboro 01532 ••• Keith & Christine St GEORGE (Kallie/92, Ashley/93, Nicole/95) PO Box 937, Lynn 01903 ••• Joan & Aren HOROWITZ (Miriam/81, Simon/85, Eli/87, Nathan/89) 11 Gannett Terr, Sharon 02067 ••• Bonnie BLACK (Mari/86, Glenn/88) 356 Harvard St, Cambridge 02138 (change) **(H)** 02138 ••• Vanessa LAYNE, Palmer St, Arlington 02174 **(H)** ••• Maureen KARLE (Michaela/87) 44 Governors Way, Barnstable 02630

MN — Nancy GRUVER & Joe KELLY (Nia & Mavis/80) 2127 Columbus Av, Duluth 55803 **(H)**

MO — Angel & Bob DOBROW (Joey/90, Danny & Tommy/94) 1803 E Washington St, Kirksville 63501 **(H)**

MT — Linda TAYLOR (Casey/82, Katy/85) 2847 Rippling Woods, Victor 59875 **(H)**

NH — Hubert & Deborah TALTY (Christopher/82, Nicholas/89) 10 Hunter Dr, Hampton 03842

NJ — Rachel & Tzvi ANOLICK (Chana/81, Bitzy/84, Meir/87, Esther/93) 191 Spring St, Passaic 07055 ••• Barbara JOELS (Lydia/81, Julia/85, William/92) 265 Hempstead Dr, Somerset 08873 **(H)**

NY — Laurie & Raymond WILLIAMS (Kerry/81, Justin/82, Kyle/87) PO Box 1680, Shelter Island 11964 **(H)** ••• Laura & Dale BALDWIN (Travis/85, Jake/87, Zack/89, Amanda/91) Thyme for Learning Homeschoolers' Network, 1372 Buttermilk Falls Rd, Fort Ann 12827 ••• Charles & Louise KNIGHT (Sarah/88, CJ/92) 113 Mott Rd, Gansevoort 12831 ••• Don & Kathy GODFREY (Donald/87, Hilary/88, Josephine/92, Roberta/95) 1232 St. Rt. 264, Phoenix 13135

OH — Bridget WALSH & Criswell DAVIS (Cole/85, Teagan/90) 7145 Shull Rd, Huber Hts 45424

OK — Mike & Julie MILLER (Phillip/90, Spencer/92, Patrick/95) Rt 1 Box 134B, Coyle 73027 ••• Diane VANLANDINGHAM (Jessica/82, Julie/86) 426 W Eufaula, Norman 73069 **(H)**

OR — Barbara & Stuart HARDLEY (Miranda/94, Ronan/96) 1560 Chambers St, Eugene 97402 **(H)**

TX — Ashley & Chris FRASER (Nicholas/92, Connor/95) 12911 Zion Rd, Tomball 77375 **(H)** ••• Diane & Jim McKINNIS (Dylan/81) 200-B Tumbleweed Trail N, Austin 78733 (change)

VT — Ruth & Tom BRADSHAW (Kate/90, Peter/94) 30 Woods St, Burlington 05401 ••• Peter & Sherri McCORMICK (Elaina/91) 29 Birch Ridge Rd, Westford 05494-9601

Canada:

BC — Kathryn & Doug ALDER (Rianna/81, Cory/83, Robert/86, Sam/89) 3276 W 22 Av, Vancouver V6L 1N2 ••• Connie ADDARIO & Stephen BERRY (Louigi/81, Hannah/92, Carmen/84, Gina/87) 150 Byron Rd, Saltspring Island V8K 1C8

ON — Joan DONAGHEY & Juan FRIAS (Pax/90, Joy/93, Maria Sol/96) 398 Delaware Av, Toronto M6H 2T8 **(H)**

Other Locations — Diana SCHNEIDER & John KENNEDY (Stefan/87, Alexander/89) 4 Goldie Pl, Kambah, ACT 2902 **Australia (H)** ••• Betti SACHS & Diego FALCONI (Maya/85, Sofia/90) apto 160, Otaualo **Ecuador (H)** ••• Martine & Christopher ARCHER (Lewis/88, Thymian & Jacob/90, Mirinda/94) 1 Westminster Av, Whalley Range, Manchester, **Great Britain** M16 OAN

Groups to add to the Directory of Organizations that was published in GWS #114:

CA — Learning Naturally, PO Box 5759, Shasta Lake 96089-5759; 916-247-0431

FL — Parent Assisted Learners (PALS), 6820 SW 65 Av, Miami 33143; 305-665-1470

Pen-Pals

Children wanting pen-pals should write to those listed. Pleae try to write to someone on the list before listing yourself, and remember to put your address on your letter. To be listed, send name, age, address, and 1-3 words on interests. ••• Beeb ASHCROFT (13) Rt 1 Box 106, Seaside OR 97138; writing, drawing, politics ••• Jessica SHAW-KOEHLER (8) 470 Texas Rd Morganville NJ 07751; art, needlework, dancing ••• Cloe POGODA (6) 239 S Cedar Brook Rd, Boulder CO 80304; dogs, snakes, toy animals ••• Grete PALSMEIER (13) RR 1 Box 185, Winfield KS 67156; stamps, art, writing ••• KRUP, PO Box 334, Sky Forest CA 92385; Ryan (10) skating, football, basketball; Hannah (6) skating, Barbies, cats ••• Mary BOWDEN (14) 821 S Cooper Rd, New Lenox IL 60451; music, trumpet, history

Lists of Resources

Once a year we print our complete lists of helpful teachers, lawyers, professors, psychologists, school districts, resource people, and grown-up homeschoolers. As with our Directory of Families, we print additions and changes to these lists throughout the year, so please continue to send them in. If you're sending us a change of address for a subscription, please let us know if you're on one of these lists so we can change it here, too. We're always interested to know whether people appreciate having this information available, so do let us know whether these lists are being used.

Certified Teachers

AK - Andy & Deb BYDLON, General Delivery, Big Lake AK 99652; 907-892-9012 (early childhood, elem., special ed.)

AZ - Kathleen M. KNEZ, Western Navajo Reservation, PO Box 889, Tuba City 86045, Special Ed

CA, South (zips to 94000) - Tutu ANDERSON, 6949 Fisk Av, San Diego 92122, 619-453-1086 ••• Karen BISHOP, N County Pl, 2204 El Camino Real, Suite 312, Oceanside 92054 ••• John BOSTON, 9942, Canyon Country Ln, Escondido 92026 ••• Michelle BUSH, 2374 Stonyvale Rd, Tujunga 91042; 818-951-7744 ••• Sandy DOERFEL, PO Box 301331, Escondido 92030 ••• Sarah LESLIE, 1846 N Edgemont #6, Los Angeles 90027; 213-662-5571

CA, North (zips 94000 & up) - Margaret ARIGHI, 6015 Mauritania Av, Oakland 94605; 415-653-5098 ••• Karen CANTO, 21023 Lynn Ln, Sonora 95370 ••• Marilyn DeVORE, 4273 Forbestown Rd, Oroville 95966 ••• Carol CRESTETTO, 29 Taft Ct, Novato 94947 ••• Jasmin GERER, 414 Emeline Av, Santa Cruz 95060; 408-423-8311 ••• Roy SHIMP, 2164 E Bellevue Rd, Merced 95340 ••• Cheryl

STEVENS, 2486 Pebble Beach Loop, Lafayette 94549 (K-12, special ed) ••• Scott YOUNG, Charlotte's Web, 1207-F Bridgeway, Sausalito CA 94965; 415-332-2244

CO - Kara BERTHOLF, #1 Rd 6565 NBU4, Kirtland 87417 (certified in CO & NM) ••• Sandra GUENTHER, 2923 Sunset Dr, Golden 80401; English, Spanish, French

CT - Geoffrey SMITH, 365 Bellevue Rd, New Haven 06511; 203-787-5659; Eng, math, 7-12, admin

FL - Charlotte THIEN, 12201 Old Kings Rd, Jacksonville 32219; 904-768-0472 ••• Roger TRUNK, Rt 1 Box 110, Satsuma 32189; 904-649-4479

HI - Debbie KUKAHIKO, FAMILY ACADEMY, 72-3960 Hawaii Belt Rd, Kailua-Kuna 96740

IL - Suzanne BALDWIN, 1452 Andover Dr, Aurora 60504; 708-851-0538 (K-12 music)

IA - Richard & Sharon CARGIN, 25 6th Av NE, LeMars 51031 ••• Rita EBELING, 324 Crescent Ln, Ft Madison 52627

IN - Marie DUSING, FAMILY ACADEMY, Rt 1 Box 509, Poland 47868; 812-986-2884

ME - Kathi KEARNEY, Box 69, New Sharon 04955; ME & VT K-12 ••• LouAnna PERKINS, Pierce Pond, RR-1 Box 22-C, Penobscot, ME 04476 (K-8) ••• Kristie SIMKO, PO Box 430, Mt Desert ME 04660 (elem.)

MD - Frances MOYER, 4017 William Ln, Bowie 20715

MA - George FOURNIER, RFD 2 Box 101, Brimfield 01010 (French) ••• Adele GARLICK, 96 Coolidge Cir, Northborough 01532 ••• George HECHT, 4 High Ledge Av, Wellesley 02181; 617-235-4246 ••• Thomas MAHER, 30 Park St, Wakefield 01880; 617-245-7634 ••• Faith Jones OZAN, 9 Tilehurst Ln, Marblehead 01945 ••• Mario PAGNONI, 76 Emsley Ter, Methuen 01844 ••• Denise STANLEY, 3 Alhort Dr, Apt. 3, Woburn 01801; 617-932-9281 ••• Sharon TERRY, 23 Mountain St, Sharon 02067; 617-784-8006 ••• Linda ZUERN, Box 619, 5 Depot Rd, Cataumet 02534

MI - Kathy DONAHUE, Box 80-B S Superior Rd, Atlantic Mine 49905; K-12 ••• Bonnie MIESEL, 1111 Cricklewood SW, Wyoming 49509 ••• Dinah MORRISON, 76 Latta St, Battle Creek 49015; 7-12 ••• Muriel PALKO, 321 N William, Ludington 49431; K-12

MN - Jeanne BOURQUIN, 1568 McMaham Blvd, Ely 55731 ••• Linda WINSOR, 1927 James Ave, St Paul 55105

NH - Sally EMBER, 284 Water St, Keene 03431 (multicultural education)

NJ - Sandy MADKIFF, MINOTOLA ACTIVITY CTR, 207 Coari Av, Minotola 08341; 609-697-1643; K-12 Eng

NM - Kara BERTHOLF, #1 Rd 6565 NBU4, Kirtland 87417 (certified in CO & NM)

NY - Lyman BARRY, 9297 Shaw Rd, Nunda 14517; 716-468-2650; science ••• Diane CHODAN, RD 1 Box 462, Rome 13440 ••• Cheryl COONEY, 225 Rector Pl, 9R, NY NY 10280 (NY, NJ, MA) ••• Lucretia GABRIEL, 12 Fairway Ct, Albany 12208; science ••• John Taylor GATTO, 235 W 76 St, New York NY 10023 ••• Joyce HOUCK, RR 1 Box 148A, Brant Lake 12815; 518-494-2072; elem ••• Kathi KEARNEY, 1230 Amsterdam Av #604, New York 10027 ••• Martin MILLER, 3374 Aikens Rd, Watkins Glen 14891; math, sci, accounting ••• Jo MOBERLY, 149 S Main St, Naples 14512 ••• Natalie TATZ, 3320 Bainbridge Av, Bronx NY 10467; 212-654-7918 (elem)

OH - Linda CAMPBELL, 1862 Merganser Run Dr, Columbus 43215 ••• Elizabeth LOWER, 4875 Potomac Dr, Fairfield 45014 (Montessori) ••• Louann Rebbin-Shaw, 4412 Osborn Rd, Medway 45341; 513-873-8124

OR - Ann LAHRSON, 9025 SW 50th, Portland 97219; 503-244-9677 ••• Marilyn LOWE, 503-362-1203 (Spanish K-12, English 7-12) ••• Mary MAYFIELD, 24874 W Brush Creek Rd, Sweet Home 97386; 503-367-2474; 5-12 ••• Marcia SPANI, ALOHA KIDS ACADEMY, 4640 SW 182, Aloha 97007; 503-642-4094; K-8

PA - Diana BASEMAN, RD 3 Box 256 B, Tarentum 15084 ••• Debby BELL, 6 Royal Rd, Palmyra 17078; language ••• Kathy HOLLEGER, 3106 Swede Rd, Norristown 19401 ••• Rick KEPHART, 1 High St, Malvern 19355 (elem)

TX - Linda JONES, 3301 Hemlock, Temple 76504; elem

VA - Scott CHRISTIAN, Rt 5 Box 358, Martinsville 24112; 703-632-3780 ••• Mary FREED, 1825 W Grace St, Richmond VA 23220 (Montessori) ••• Suzanne STALLINGS, 301 Macon St, Lynchburg 24501-3221; 804-528-4585

VT - Jerry FRAIN, RR 1 Box 31, Walden 05873; 802-563-9947

WA - Mary COLES, 9255 36th SW, Seattle WA 98126 (reading & study skills) ••• FAMILY ACADEMY (teachers all over WA state), 146 SW 153 Box 290, Seattle 98166; 206-246-9227 ••• Karen FOGLE, 14241 NE Wdnvl Duvall #243, Woodinville 98072; 206-481-2228 ••• Julie & David LOYD, General Delivery, Waldron 98297; (Julie: elem, Spanish, math; David: elem, high school, English, Spanish, Social Studies) ••• Tara SENNETT, 15506 19th Av, Tacoma 33445 ••• Denis WICHAR, Cascade Jr High School, 13900 NE 18th St, Vancouver 98684-7299; 256-6052

WI - Cheryl & Bruce BISHOP, 5148 Bluff Ct, Sturgeon Bay 54235; elem ••• Alison McKEE, 5745 Bittersweet Pl, Madison 53705; elem, vis. impair

CANADA - Leslie AYRE-JASCHKE, 10409-101 St, Peace River AB T8S 1K7

ELSEWHERE- James A. PETRAIT, St. Joseph High School, Plot 3, Rt 2, Frederiksted, St. Croix, Virgin Islands 00840; school 809-772-0455, home 809-778-5761

Lawyers

CT - Frank Cochran, 51 Elm St, PO Box 1898, New Haven 06508-1898; 203-865-7380

FL - Charles Baron, 167th and NE 6th, NO. 815, N. Miami Beach 33160; 305-770-1410 ••• James R. Wells, 3837 Quail Ridge Dr, Boynton Beach 33436; 407-734-5068

HI - Tom DiGrazia, DiGrazia Law Office, PO Box 1780, Kailua 96734

ID - Lyle Eliasen, 202 Idaho St, American Falls 83211; 208-226-5138

IA - Craig Hastings, 315 6th St, Ames 50010; 515-232-2501

KS - Austin Kent Vincent, 2222 Pennsylvania Av, Topeka 66605; 913-234-0022

MD - Ray Fidler, 805 Tred Avon Rd, Baltimore 21212; 410-296-6495 ••• Paul Kimberger, 3905 Bexley Pl, Marlow Hghts 20746; 301-899-6933 ••• Dale R. Reid, 7091 Brangles Rd, Marriottsville 21104

MA - Eugene Burkart, 267 Moody St, Waltham 02154; 617-899-5337 ••• Susan Ostberg, 41 Warren Av, Harvard 01451; 508-456-8515

MI - Penelope Kozminski, 6650 Tanglewood SE, Grand Rapids 49546-7256; 616-942-4638 ••• Norm Perry, 8976 US 31, PO Box 241, Berrien Spgs 49103; 616-471-2848

NY - Seth Rockmuller, 29 Kinderhook St, Chatham 12037; 518-392-4277

OH - David A. Haffey, 3055 Rodenbeck Dr, Dayton 45432-2662 ••• James Peters, 107 W. Court St, Woodsfield 43793; 614-472-1681

OR - Kim Gordon, 6501 SW Macadam Av, Portland 97201; 503-452-9595

PA - Mark Semisch, 56 Warden Rd, Doylestown 18901

VA – Nancy LeSourd & George Grange II, 8280 Greensboro Dr, 7th Fl, McLean VA 22102

WI - Jack Umpleby, N96W18221 County Line Rd, Menomeonee Falls 53051-1300

WY - Gerald Mason, PO Box 785, Pinedale 82941; 307-367-2134 ••• William H. Twichell, PO Box 1219, Pinedale 82941; 307-367-2414

Professors

The following people are willing to help homeschooling families in developing curriculum, evaluating progress, or in other ways:

Larry Arnoldsen, Box 10 McKay Bldg, Brigham Young U, Provo UT 84602

Graham Ashworth, 423 Fox Chapel Rd, Pittsburgh PA 15238; 412-963-8800

Prof. Robert A. Carlson, College of Ed, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan Canada S7N OWO

Sandy Doerfel, PO Box 301331, Escondido CA 92030

Juanita Haddad, Consultant in Free Range Learning and Deschooling, RR 7, Duncan BC V9L 4W4, Canada

Robert E. Kay, MD, PO Box C, Paoli PA 19301; 215-359-7885

J. Gary Knowles, Program in Educational Studies, School of Ed, U of Michigan, Ann Arbor MI 48109-1259

Michael Masny, 43 Burncoat St, Leicester MA 01524; 617-892-8012; certified school psychologist & social worker

Martin Miller, 3374 Aikens Rd, Watkins Glen NY 14891

Michael J. Murphy, Assoc. Prof., U. of Saskatchewan, College of Education, Saskatoon, Sask., Canada S7N 0W0 (cont. next page)

ENTRY FORM FOR DIRECTORY

Use this form to send us a new entry or a substantial address change to be run in the next available issue of GWS.

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Or in the additions in this issue? Yes ___ No ___

GWS, 2269 Mass. Ave., Cambridge MA 02140

Dr. Robert Newman, Assoc Prof Emeritus, Teacher Education, Syracuse U, 137 Hughes Pl, Syracuse NY 13210

Seymour Papert, email papert@media.mit.edu

Sam B. Peavey, Ed.D., 2307 Tyler Ln, Louisville KY 40205, 502-459-2058

Edward Pino, 189 Antelope Tr, Parker CO 80134

Richard Prystowsky, Professor of English and Humanities, Irvine Valley College, 5500 Irvine Ctr Dr, Irvine CA 92720

Brian D. Ray, National Home Education Research Institute, Western Baptist College, 5000 Deer Park Dr SE, Salem OR 97301-9392

Mitchel Resnick, MIT Media Lab, 20 Ames St, Cambridge MA 02139; email mres@media.mit.edu

Jack Robertson, 532 Laguardia Pl #398, New York NY 10012-1428

Gary L. Stevens, University of San Francisco, 2486 Pebble Beach Loop, Lafayette CA 94549

Seymour Treiger, Ed.D., RR 3 Yellow Pt Rd, Ladysmith, BC V0R 2E0, Canada

Chester S. Williams, ETSU, Box 5518, Texarkana TX 75501, 214-838-5458

Psychologists

CA - Michelle Bush, 2374 Stonyvale Rd, Tujunga 91042 ••• Mary Ann Hutchison, 3409 Greenwood Av, Los Angeles 90066, 310-281-7711 ••• Hal Jindich, 191 E El Camino #307, Mountain 94040, 415-969-9981

MA - Michael Masny, 43 Burncoat St, Leicester 01524 (certified school psychologist and social worker) ••• Dr. Susan Ott, 110 N Main, Petersham 01366, 508-939-2161,e xt. 2205 ••• Paul Shafiroff, Ed.D., Director of Guidance, Southern Berkshire Regional School District, Sheffield 01257 ••• Dr. Paul Daniel Shea, 1450 Beacon St, Suite 801, Brookline 02146, 617-277-4214

NY - Emily Shapiro, 350 Central Park West, Suite 1F, New York NY 10025, 212-774-4156 (psychotherapy, counseling)

OH - Richard George, 1201 30th St NW, Canton 44709

PA - Dr. Bob Conroy, 1724 Smoky Corners Rd, Williamsport 17701

TX - Steven Gutstein, PhD, One West Loop, Suite #215, Houston 77027, 713-621-7496

WA - Naomi Aldort, PO Box 1719, Eastsound 98245-1719, 360-376-3777 ••• Holy Family Institute, 43 Frontier Rd, Appleton WA 98602 (counselors)

CANADA - Jan Hunt, 132 Bullock Creek Rd, Salt Spring Island, BC, V8K 2L3

School Districts

The following is a list of school districts that are willingly and happily cooperating with homeschoolers, and who are willing to be listed in GWS as doing so. There are many more cooperative districts around the country than there are districts on this list, and we have printed several stories in back issues of GWS about cooperation between schools and home-schoolers. If you are interested in seeing this material, place an order and ask us to send you back issues with material on this topic. Back issues are $3 each plus $3 per order for subscribers; $6 each for nonsubscribers.

Do bear in mind that not all states require homeschooling families to work with local school districts; in fact, many do not. Nonetheless, a cooperative school district may give homeschooling families access to events or materials even if they are not legally required to approve of or evaluate those families.

We only list school districts under the following conditions: (1) The family has to be not just satisfied but pleased with the cooperation the schools are giving to their homeschooling efforts. (2) The schools themselves have to be happy about being included in the list. If your district is cooperating with your homeschooling, and you would like them to be on this list, ask them, and let us know if they say to go ahead.

CA - Butte County Office of Education, 2120 B Robinson, Oroville CA 95965, James H. Scott, Principal, Home School Program

Lodi Unified School District, 835 W Lockford St, Lodi 95240; 209-369-7411; Don Shalvey, Asst. Supt. - Instruction K-12

Loma Prieta School District, 23800 Summit Rd, Los Gatos 95030; 408-353-2389; Dr. Kenneth Simpkins, Superintendent; Dr. Ruth Bothne, Independent Home Study Program Director

Marysville Joint Unified, 1919 B St, Marysville 95901

Monterey County Office of Education, 901 Blanco Circle, PO Box 80851, Salinas 93912; Bill LaPlante, Director of Alternative Programs

Mt Shasta Union School District, 601 E Alma St, Mt Shasta 96067; 916-926-3846; Carolyn Briody, Home School Coordinator

Santa Cruz City Schools, Alternative Family Education, 536 Palm St, Santa Cruz 95060; 408-429-3806, Attn: Terry Jones

FL - Student Services, Putnam Cty Schools, 200 S 7th, Palatka FL 32177; 904-329-0538; contact John Milton, asst. Director

IL - Madison Junior High, Southern River Oak Dr, Naperville 60565; Mr. Vergo, Principal

Naperville Central High School, 44 W Aurora Av, Naperville 60540; Mr. Paulsen, Principal

(note: these are individual schools, not school districts.)

MA - Cambridge Public Schools, 159 Thorndike St, Cambridge 02141; 617-498-9233

Chatham Public Schools, Chatham MA 02633; Supt. Vida R. Gavin

Lowell School District, 89 Appleton, Lowell 01852; 454-5431; James McMahon, Asst. Supt. for Curriculum Development

Rockland Public Schools, Rockland 02370; Supt. Ronald P. Gerhart

Southern Berkshire Regional School District, Sheffield 01257; Director of Guidance, Paul Shafiroff, Thomas A. Consolati, Supt.

PA - Radnor Township School District, Administration Building, 135 S. Wayne Av, Wayne 19087; Dr. John A. DeFlaminis, Supt.

Resource People

The people listed below have experience with the following subjects and are willing to correspond with others who are interested. In many cases these subjects have been discussed in back issues of GWS, so if you are seeking information you can ask us to select the relevant issues for you. (Back issues are $3 each plus $3 per order for subscribers; $6 for nonsubscribers).

Adoption: Maureen Carey, 7 Fayette Park, Cambridge MA 02139 (adoptive nursing, interracial adoption) ••• Kathy Donahue, Box 80-B S. Superior Rd, RR 1, Atlantic Mine MI 49905 ••• Marty Gylleck, 34356 State Rt 23, Genoa IL 60135 (interracial adoption) ••• Lenne Musarra, 6729 Sherri St, Juneau AK 99801-9443 ••• Reed & Chris Sims, RD 2 Box 34, Jericho VT 05465, 802-899-4507 (interracial adoption) ••• Jenny Wright, Quaker City, H.C. 60, Box 50, Charlestown NH 03603, 603-543-0910

Autism: Cindy Gaddis, 928 Turnberry Dr, Richmond KY 40475, 606-624-3571 ••• Henry Lappen, 120 Pulpit Hill Rd #31, Amherst MA 01002, 413-549-3722 (Asperger's Syndrome) ••• Jill Whelan, 1714 E 51st St, Indianapolis IN 46205

Blindness: Donald & Kathy Klemp (son/75), N6479 Kroghville Rd, Waterloo WI 53594 ••• Ruth Matilsky, 109 S 4th Av, Highland Park NJ 08904 ••• Alison McKee, 5745 Bittersweet Pl, Madison WI 53705

Computers: Jack Loranger, MPO 1/-R Krogstad Rd, Washougal WA 98671, 206-837-3760; "Electronic Educator" BBS #837-3299 ••• Mario Pagnoni, 76 Emsley Terr, Methuen MA 01844

Custody Disputes: Debbie Driscoll, 14503 SE 114th Pl, Renton WA 98059 (also single parents & gay & lesbian families) ••• Char Love, PO Box 2035, Guerneville CA 95446-2035. (We maintain a list of others with experience in this area who prefer not to list themselves publicly, and we will forward stamped letters to these people if asked.)

Down Syndrome: Elaine Bechtold, 10827 Rosedale Av N, Rt 1 Box 233, Loretto MN 55357-9793, 612-498-7553 ••• Rosemary Firstenberg, PO Box 25266, Seattle WA 98125 ••• Heidi Jarvis, N8373 Center Rd, Gleason WI 54435, 715-873-4050

Gifted Children: Isabelle Nidever, 5917 Oak Av, Suite 176, Temple City CA 91780-2404; 818-287-8595

Ham Radio: Sheryl Schuff, 8156 Lieber Rd, Indianapolis IN 46260; 317-259-4778

Learning Disabilities: ••• Pose M.R. Boggs, 6223 Geronimo Cir, Anchorage AK 99504 ••• Kathy Donahue, Box 80-B S. Superior Rd, RR 1, Atlantic Mine MI 49905 ••• Rosemary Firstenberg, PO Box 25266, Seattle WA 98125 ••• Leslie McColgin, RR 1 Box 146, Cunningham KY 42035 (speech & language pathologist) ••• Chris Sims, RD 2 Box 34, Jericho VT 05465, 802-899-4507 ••• Cheryl & Gary Stevens, 2486 Pebble Beach Loop, Lafayette CA 94549 (Special Ed., Chemical Sensitivity)

Mental Illness: Jennifer Rozens, 33411 Jefferson Av, St Clair Shores MI 48082

Montessori: Gloria Harrison, Rd 11, Box 544, Greensburg PA 15601 ••• Elizabeth Lowen, 5928 Morningside Dr, Fairfield OH 45015

Physical Handicaps: Janna Books, Box 309-B, Route 2, Santa Fe NM 87505 ••• Kathy Donahue, Box 80-B S. Superior Rd, RR 1, Atlantic Mine MI 49905 ••• Karen Franklin, 3939 Winfield Rd, Boynton Bch FL 33436 (Jessica/80 C.P.) ••• Martin Miller, 3374 Aikens Rd, Watkins Glen NY 14891 ••• Lenne Musarra (see under Adoption) ••• Saunny Scott, 1901 Barker St, Lawrence KS 66044

Single Parents: Debbie Driscoll (see under Custody Disputes) ••• Janet Hoffman, PO Box 288, Hamburg PA 19526-0288 ••• Diane McNeil, 3131 Cty EE, Baileys Harbor WI 54202 ••• Laura Pritchard, 25607 98th Pl So, Apt K-102, Kent WA 98031 ••• Lisa Spector, 203-677-2852 ••• Karen Turner, PO Box 622, Redway CA 95560-0622 ••• Beth White, PO Box 3734, Eugene OR 97403, 541-935-5457 ••• Christine Willard, 2090 Pine Ave, Los Osos CA 93402

Traveling Families: Lois & Jim Blumenthal, 1132 Beechwood Dr, Hagerstown MD 21742-3007 ••• Louis & Jennifer Gordon (Katie/81, Patty/84) 10355 Grand Av, Bloomington MN 55420-5228 ••• Arlene Haight (Becky/68, Matt/73) 4150 So US #1, RD 2, Palm Bay FL 32905

Twins: Gloria Harrison, Rd 11, Box 544, Greensburg PA 15601

Grown-Up Homeschoolers

These former homeschoolers are now at college or involved in work, apprenticeships, or travel. In most cases, we list their parents' address because the homeschoolers' own addresses change often. In parentheses, we include a very brief description of what the person is doing or has done, and, where applicable, we have also listed the GWS issue in which a more complete description of the person's experience was published. Get in touch with these folks if you're interested in attending their college or exploring their field or if you're ust interested in the perspective of a grown homeschooler. (List begins on next page.)

Alazel Acheson, 2121 S Alaska, Tacoma WA 98405; 206-272-8124 (U. of Puget Sound; computer research and development)

Eleadari Acheson, 6575 S Simmons Dr, Clinton WA 98236; 206-341-7330 (teaching gymnastics; GWS #76)

Tia Acheson, 6575 S Simmons Dr, Clinton WA 98236; 206-341-7330 (School of Visual Concepts, Seattle)

Elye Alexander, RR 1 Box 795, Craftsbury Common VT 05827 (Harvard University)

Mylie Alrich, 405 Terrace Mt Dr, Austin TX 78746; 512-327-3888 (restaurant work, real estate)

Ben Barker, 5221 Twp Rd 123, Millersburg OH 44654 (fiddler, EMT, expedition guide; GWS #86, #93)

Britt Barker, 5221 Twp Rd 123, Millersburg OH 44654 (published writer & poet; pilot; railroad engineer; runs piano studio; GWS #56, #60, #93)

Dan Barker, 5221 Twp Rd 123, Millersburg OH 44654 (cellist at Interlochen Arts Academy; Oberlin Conservatory; directs farm program; GWS #79, #84, #93)

Jonah Barker 5221 Twp Rd 123, Millersburg OH 44654 (directs farm program; works with solar-powered technology, motorcycles)

Maggie Barker, 5221 Twp Rd 123, Millersburg OH 44654 (dogsledder, Search & Rescue; certified massage therapist; expedition guide; GWS #60, #81, #88, #91)

Amanda Bergson-Shilcock, 314 Bryn Mawr Av, Bryn Mawr PA 19010; 610-527-4982 (University of Pennsylvania; library work, writing; GWS #97, #110)

Emily Bergson-Shilcock, 314 Bryn Mawr Av, Bryn Mawr PA 19010; 610-527-4982 (Beaver College; runs The Destination of Independence, a store selling products to people with disabilities; GWS #106, #115)

Stephanie Bromfield, 1329 Blue Mtn Dr, Danielsville PA 18038; 215-767-3554 (community college; retail work)

Anne Brosnan, 173 Pioneer Dr, Richmond KY 40475 (bluegrass music, library work, newspaper editing; GWS #109)

Rebecca Cauthen, 260 Donald Lamb Rd, Moreland GA 30259-2666 (Shorter College; GWS #97)

Amber Clifford, 475 NE 200, Knob Noster MO 65336 (Central MO State U; GWS #97)

Jeff Cohen, 1499 S Lima, Aurora CO 80012 (US Air Force Academy; GWS #81, #93)

Tamara Cohen, 1499 S Lima St, Aurora CO 80012 (foreign exchange student; Agnes Scott College, Atlanta, GA)

Mariama Congo, 97 Brayton Rd, Brighton MA 02135 (Goddard College, VT)

Erin Dodd, PO Box 6366, Mars Hill College, Mars Hill NC 28754; 704-689-6379 (theatre, teaching)

Mike Dodd, 1648 Joe Hinton Rd, Knoxville TN 37931 (Boston University, University of Tennessee; GWS #71)

Leonie Edwards, PO Box 75, Harrisburg OR 97446 (dentistry; GWS #110)

Michelle Edwards, PO Box 392, Harrisburg OR 97446 (runs photography studio; GWS #110

Andrew Endsley, 4546 Willow Crest Dr, Toluca Lake CA 91602 (film directing; GWS #77, #97)

Luke Evans, 10755 Hibner Rd, Hartland MI 48353; 810-632-7424 (Civil Air Patrol; Washtenaw Community College; GWS #115)

Kendall Gelner, 7490 W Apache, Sedalia CO 80135 (Rice University, computer programming)

Laura Gelner, 7490 W Apache, Sedalia CO 80135 (Colorado College; GWS #89)

Anita Giesy, 4411 Colonial Dr, Norfolk VA 23508 (cross-country travel; dance; massage therapy; living in Spain; GWS #74, #77)

Jeremiah Gingold, PO Box 74, Midpines CA 95345 (UC Santa Cruz; computer systems work)

Tad Heuer, 164 Norfolk St, Holliston MA 01746 (Brown University; GWS #102)

Gordon Hubbell, Blvd Tsar Boris III No. 94, Sofia, Bulgaria (factory worker, LDS missionary)

Bronwyn Jackson, 1000 Devil's Dip, Tallahassee FL 32308; 904-878-2793 (Wellesley College; U. of Virginia; GWS #96)

Gwyneth Jackson, 1000 Devil's Dip, Tallahassee FL 32308; 904-878-2793 (Wellesley College)

Vanessa Keith, HC 60 Box 50, Quaker City, Charlestown NH 03603 (farm work, travel; GWS #89)

Celia Kendrick 40 Brook St, Rehoboth MA 02769 (Rhode Island School of Design; animation work; GWS #75, #82)

Ely Lester, PO Box 203, Joshua Tree CA 92252 (Rowland Heights Animation School; GWS #100, 101)

Nathen Lester, PO Box 203, Joshua Tree CA 92252 (Mt. Shasta College - a recording engineering school; GWS #100, 101)

Emily Linn, 9120 Dwight Dr, Detroit MI 48214; 313-331-8406 (U. of Michigan)

Christian McKee, 5745 Bittersweet Pl, Madison WI 53705 (fly tying; teaching radio and German; GWS #100, #111)

Christian Murphy, RD 6 Box 24, Wellsboro PA 16901 (Williams College; GWS #100)

Emily Murphy, RD 6 Box 24, Wellsboro PA 16901 (St. John's College; archivist work; GWS #89, #109)

Emily Ostberg, PO Box 246, Harvard MA 01451 (apprenticeship with medicinal plants in Belize; Pomona College; GWS #96)

Sarah Pitts, 3143 Semmes St, East Point GA 30344-4671 (Boston College; GWS #96)

Jesse Richman, RD 2 Box 117, Kittanning PA 16201 (U of Pittsburgh Honors College; Semester at Sea; GWS #109)

Emma Roberts, RR 1 Box 81, Jewell Hill Rd, Ashby MA 01431; 508-386-7084 (theatre, American Repertory Theatre school; GWS #73, #76)

Erin Roberts, 925 Huffmaster Rd, Knoxville MD 21758 (Bethany College; 4-H; Congressional intern; GWS #109)

Kevin Sellstrom, PO Box 612, Wilton CA 95693; 916-687-7053 (teachers' aid with special ed children; works with Boy Scouts waterfront program & therapeutic horseback riding program for handicapped youth and adults; attends community college)

Mae Shell, RR 2 Box 289-C, Polly Hubbard Rd, St. Albans VT 05478; 802-524-9645 (library work and certification; designs web pages; GWS #109)

Sara Shell, RR 2 Box 289-C, Polly Hubbard Rd, St. Albans VT 05478; 802-524-9645 (Tisch School of the Arts at New York University)

Dawn Shuman, St. John's College, PO Box 2800, Annapolis MD 21404-2800 (GWS #100; #108)

Jamie Smith, 9085 Flamepool Way, Columbia MD 21045; 410-730-0073 (U. of Maryland/Baltimore; GWS #108, #113)

Lindsey Smith, 1800 Skyline Dr, Lincoln NE 68506 (NE Missouri State U, conservation work)

Seth Smith, 1800 Skyline Dr, Lincoln NE 68506 (NE Missouri State U, Central Methodist College, conservation & outdoor work)

Jacob Spicer, 7080 Leaches Crossing, Avoca WI 53506; 608-562-3969 (U. of Chicago, managing furniture store; GWS #89)

Jessica Spicer, 7080 Leaches Crossing, Avoca WI 53506; 608-562-3969 (intern at Cato Institute in Washington, DC; GWS #95)

Kim Kopel Stewart, 319 N Mulberry St, apt G, Fayette MO 65248 (intern at living history village; massage therapy; GWS #87, #99)

Bo Yoder, 76 Beech Ridge Rd, Scarborough ME 04074; 207-883-9621 (game design; acoustical recording engineering; studying economics)

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Please: (1) Put separate items of business (book orders, directory entries, letters to GWS, etc.) on separate pieces of paper. This helps us get them to the right people more quickly. (2) Put your name and address at the top of each letter. (3) If you're writing to a specific person, write "GWS" or "Holt Associates" on the envelope in addition to the individual's name.

How to write letters for publication in GWS:

1. Handwrite, type, or dictate your thoughts and send them in on paper, on a cassette tape, or on a 3.5" disc that can be read by a Macintosh (send the hard copy too).

2. There is no #2! We have no formal submission procedures, so rule #1 is all you need. Do tell us whether it's OK to use your name with the story (it's fine to be anonymous instead) and do bear in mind that we edit letters for space and clarity and that we often have much more great stuff than room to print it in a given issue, so it can take a while before something gets in.

The best way to get a sense of what kind of writing gets published in GWS is to look through a few issues. In general, we prefer writing that is in the first- or third-person ("I did this" or "She did that") rather than in the instructional or proscriptive second-person ("You should do this..."). We like to hear about what people did or tried, what did or didn't work, what they've observed or concluded or wondered as a result. GWS stories focus on how children learn, particularly how they learn outside of school settings, and how adults learn, particularly how they tried something new, figured something out, or made their way without school credentials. We are always interested in stories about how homeschoolers meet and deal with common issues – negotiating with a school district, pursuing a particular interest, learning to trust oneself – to name just a few.

We're always interested in responses to writing that has been published in the past, and GWS is often an ongoing conversation among its readers. Because there isn't much time between the day you get an issue of the magazine and the day the next issue goes to press, responses can't always be run right away, but we do try.

Most of the time, readers don't need a special invitation to write to GWS; just follow rule #1, above. When we are planning to have a section of an issue focus on a specific topic or question, we write or call people ahead of time inviting them to write on that topic. These are readers whom we suspect (based on previous correspondence) have experience with the subject or something to say on the topic. The more we hear from you, the more likely we are to know what you might be able to write about and thus the more likely we are to think of you when a particular topic comes up. For our regular Focus section, we ask kids who have written in the past, kids who have said they would like to write, and – mostly – kids chosen at random from the Directory and pen-pal listings. If you want to be asked to write for an upcoming Focus, drop us a card, or, better yet, write a GWS story about something else (your thoughts or experiences, your response to something in a previous issue).

We love hearing from readers whether or not we are able to publish the story, as all letters give us valuable information and food for thought.

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Subscriptions start with the next issue published. Our current rates are $25 for 6 issues, $45 for 12 issues, $60 for 18 issues. GWS is published every other month. A single issue costs $6.

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Free accommodation and use of jeep on St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands, in exchange for looking after 9-year-old boy. Mother will be away and father works as OB-GYN and has unpredictable hours. Dates: Feb. 12-26. 809-776-3931.

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Book Reviews

The Best of Boomerang! (4 cassette tapes)
#3360 $24.95 + $4.50 s/h

Right up at the top of my kids' list of favorite magazines is one they *listen* to. Move over *Ranger Rick* and *ZooBooks*, here comes *Boomerang!*

Boomerang! is "the monthly children's magazine about big ideas," and *Best of Boomerang!* is a collection of four 70-minute cassette tapes that feature the best selections from this audio magazine. We tried out the collection and found a world of ideas beckoning us. Each magazine highlights regular features with appealing kid personalities. For example, Josie the time-traveling reporter visits people who are contributing to important turning points in history (Georgia O'Keeffe, Jonas Salk, Joan of Arc, and Cesar Chavez are featured in this collection). The King of Complicated Stuff tackles the "big ideas" of violence and TV, "why go to school?" (homeschooling is covered favorably, through interviews with homeschoolers!), welfare, and the Bosnian War. Other engaging personalities treat us to information about geography, detective stories, the natural sciences, economics, and much more.

One of my favorite personalities is Freddie the Money Man, who learns real economics as he tends his rhubarb-and-banana-sandwich stand. In one skit, a customer stops by for the usual R & B sandwich to go, but then notices a rare baseball card for sale on Freddie's stand. Freddie is ready to sell after a $20 offer, but is encouraged by a friend observing the deal to hold onto the card because it might be worth more. After the customer makes a final $150 offer and is refused, he leaves, and Freddie and his friend later look up the current value listed in a baseball card book – $60! When the customer returns on another day, he is no longer passionate about the card and can only afford to spend $10, which Freddie downheartedly accepts. The customer leaves a tip to Freddie and to the listeners: "The first rule of buyin' and sellin' is that something is worth what someone is willin' to pay."

Boomerang! reminds me of good programs like *All Things Considered* on public radio. Without being condescending or oversimplifying the content, the program aims directly at its young audience and relates kid-to-kid. When I heard the program and saw the interest it generated in my kids, I suspected that children must somehow be involved in the production of the show; it felt that genuine. Promotional literature later confirmed that the issues, stories, and subjects are decided in roundtable fashion by an editorial stafff of children and adults. The adults write the stories and music and the children report and act throughout the tapes. I'm doubly pleased that *Boomerang!* is more than just a good show; it's a good example of how adults can provide children with access to the real world and how adults and children can work together on things that really matter to them.

I highly recommend *Boomerang!* for children older than about 6 or so, and (as with so much high-quality children's material), adults will likely want to listen as well. The "big ideas" treated here with intelligence and humor can lead to some thoughtful discussion within the family or can dovetail with a child's existing interests. Don't be surprised if your child wants to subscribe to this great magazine after listening to a sample on tape – my kids did!

– Steve Cobb

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Celebration

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Patrick Farenga
President of Holt Associates, Publisher of Growing Without Schooling

John Taylor Gatto
NY State Teacher of the Year, author of *Dumbing Us Down*, and *The Exhausted School*

Susannah Sheffer
Editor of GWS, author of *Sense of Self: Listening to Homeschooled Adolescent Girls*, and *Writing Because We Love To*

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Write or call us to get a registration packet!

Where: The Westin Hotel in Waltham/Boston

When: August 8, 9, and 10th, 1997

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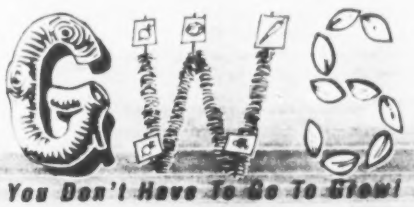

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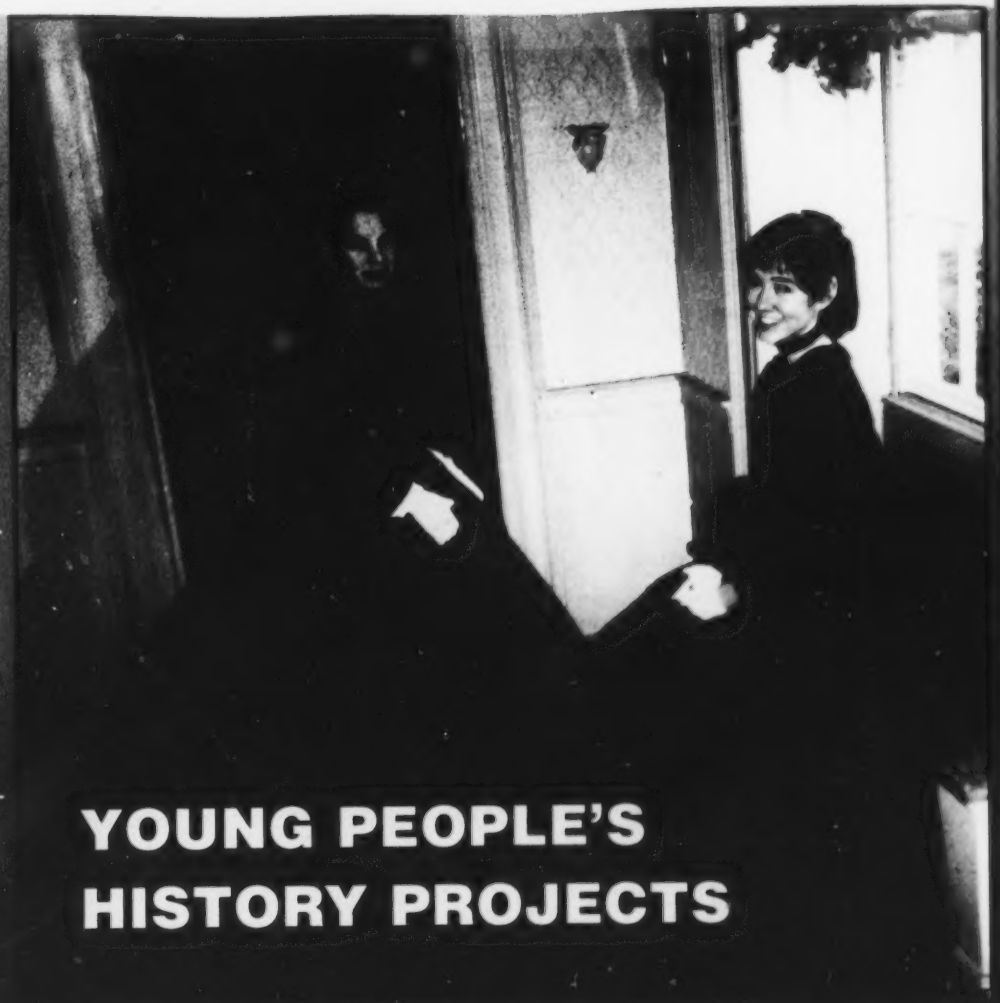

How Kids Evaluate Their Work

Rethinking *Discipline*

Homeschooling Children With Autism

YOUNG PEOPLE'S HISTORY PROJECTS

HOW PARENTS ARE CHANGED BY HOMESCHOOLING

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Issue #116
May/June '97

GWS

Founded in 1977
By John Holt

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Cover photos of Katey Yoder (right) and Laura Rosenberg. See Young People's History Projects, p. 6.

Growing Without Schooling #116, Vol. 20, No. 1, ISSN #0475-5305. Published by Holt Associates, 2269 Mass. Ave., Cambridge MA 02140. $25 /yr. Date of issue: April 1, 1997. Second-class postage paid at Boston, MA and at additional mailing offices.
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to GWS, 2269 Mass. Ave, Cambridge, MA 02140.
ADVERTISERS: Space reservation deadlines are the 1st of odd-numbered months. Copy deadlines are the 15th. Write for rates.

In this issue

In the opening pages of *A Sense of Self*, I tell about Nicola, a 14-year-old homeschooler who was in a violin class in which the students were asked to critique their own performance. The other students were uncomfortable about having to evaluate themselves. Most of them kept turning to the teacher to check with her. Nicola was the only one who seemed to find it natural to look to herself for an evaluation of her performance.

Though I told this story as one in a series of examples of how homeschooled girls stand out with respect to self-confidence and trust in their own perceptions, I always felt that the subject of self-evaluation was fascinating in itself and deserved a closer look. There's so much talk in education about how best to evaluate young people, and so little talk about the fact that being able to evaluate one's own work is an important skill. But think of the dependence that comes from having to rely only on outside evaluation, from having no idea how you "did" until you get the test back or see your report card or hear your teacher tell you what she thinks.

This is the kind of dependence that some educators think young people have to live with, but as the thoughts from homeschoolers in this issue's Focus show, young people can be quite capable of looking critically at their work and evaluating their progress over time. Even when people are novices in a particular area, they are capable of discerning the gap between what they've done so far and what they want to do. In working with young writers, if I remember first to ask how *they* feel about the piece and what they think still needs work, I'm surprised by how accurate their assessments are. Sometimes they'll say they're dissatisfied with exactly the aspects I was going to comment on myself. It doesn't help a beginner to say, "You achieved 76% of what's possible" (which is essentially what grades do). Rather, it seems to me, beginners are looking for advice about how to close the gap between what they are trying to do and what they have managed to do so far.

Which is why thinking about evaluation inevitably leads me to thinking about goals. The deeper flaw in schooling's usual system of external evaluation is that the students are seldom setting and working toward their own goals in the first place. Self-evaluation only makes sense if you're asking yourself, "What am I trying to do, and how close have I come?" Otherwise, it becomes something more like, "I'll try to guess how well I have met someone else's expectations," and that mind-reading game is, I fear, more often than not what characterizes the experiments in which students are asked to give themselves their own grades. The young people in this issue, however, are talking about whether or not they can evaluate their progress according to their own standards. As part of this process, they do indeed sometimes seek out feedback from others, but the key question – so often the key question in education – is: who's in charge?

— Susannah Sheffer

News & Reports

Homeschoolers in Georgia Defeat Restrictive Bill

House Bill 586 was introduced into the Georgia House of Representatives on February 14 and dropped four days later as a result of massive lobbying from the homeschooling community. The bill would have required homeschooling parents to have a bachelor's degree or to employ a certified teacher as a tutor; to write a semi-annual progress assessment report, have the children take an annual standardized test, and maintain a portfolio of records; to submit a curriculum and lesson plan to the superintendent each year; to submit immunization records to the superintendent; to select a certified teacher who would evaluate the child's progress at the end of each year. The teacher would have had to submit a written evaluation to the superintendent, and if the child were "found to be deficient either through standardized testing or through the teacher evaluation, the home school instructor must provide remedial instruction and the home study program shall be on probation for one year."

The requirements of the current Georgia law are far less stringent. Parents are required to test their children every three years but keep the results themselves, rather than submitting them to the superintendent. Parents also write up an evaluation at the end of the year, but the same is true; they don't have to show it to anyone (unless, under special circumstances, they are ordered to by court). The only materials parents need to submit to the superintendent are an intent-to-homeschool form and attendance records, and parents need only have a GED or a high school diploma.

Georgia homeschooling parent Catherine Morris told us that the chair of the Education Committee explained to her why this bill was introduced at this particular time. Apparently, another of the sponsoring Representatives, Rep. Carolyn Hugley, had been approached by a school counselor in her district who said that a previously homeschooled student had arrived in her school and was nowhere near the grade level that the parents had claimed. The counselor was upset and argued that homeschooling needed to be more tightly regulated. So Rep. Hugely and several colleagues from the Education Committee introduced HB 586.

Phone trees among various Georgia homeschool groups spread the word, and, according to Catherine, legislators' phone lines were soon jammed with homeschoolers arguing that the current law (which has been in effect since 1984) was working well, that most homeschoolers are doing well and that, as in public schools, there may be some who are doing less well, but that, essentially, "hard cases make bad law" and it would be wrong to write a law for the worst-case scenario.

The bill was dropped without even being voted on, and a couple of weeks later, on March 3, homeschoolers organized a legislative day at the capitol, with tables of information written to inform legislators about the issues that were raised in the bill.

New Books of Interest

From Pat Farenga:

Many new and interesting books keep arriving at our office. Here are a few that I think GWS readers will find especially interesting; you can order them from the publisher or ask your bookstore to order them for you.

Mary Griffith, a homeschooler and education activist, has taken her experiences and those of other homeschoolers she knows and created *The Homeschooling Handbook* (Prima Publishing). It is the most up-to-date and comprehensive survey of the homeschooling movement yet produced. Though Griffith covers everything you need to know – "The Legal Stuff," "Structure," "Evaluation and Recordkeeping," "Money and Other Practical Matters," etc. – she manages to do it without being glib or incomplete. Packed with resources and brief firsthand accounts from practicing homeschoolers, this book is especially good for parents considering homeschooling for the first time (regardless of the ages of their children) and for homeschoolers who want to alter their style and are interested in seeing what's out there for them to try.

Why Schools Fail, by Bruce Goldberg (Cato Institute), is written by a professor of philosophy and is packed with fantastic arguments and data that challenge all the conventional ideas of the educational establishment. "In brief," writes Goldberg, "defenders of schooling in its present form claim that its programs are arrived at scientifically and are applicable to everyone. I believe that the programs are not arrived at scientifically and are not applicable to everyone. The present work is an attempt to illustrate those points." Goldberg does a masterful, swift, and humorous demolition of the "logic" behind nearly all school reforms and programs. He offers a ringing endorsement for individualizing children's educations in numerous ways (a strength he finds among homeschoolers).

Six Months Off, by Hope Dlugozima, James Scott, and David Sharp (Henry Holt), shows you how to plan and take a long break from work without losing your job, your savings, or your friends and family. Based on case histories, the book details negotiating strategies for getting a long break from work and ways of organizing and thinking about sabbaticals. It offers more than 50 programs, grants, internships, and vacations to inspire you to see the possibilities you have to recharge your batteries, build a bridge to a new career, or learn and do something you've always wanted to do but never found the time to try.

Challenging the Giant, vol. 3, is the newest collection edited by Mary Leue, founder of the Albany Free School. The book gathers together some of the best articles from *Skole*, the journal of educational alternatives

that Mary Leue also edits. The articles are of interest to anyone thinking about education philosophy and seeking a rationale for helping children learn in communal, flexible ways. Mary and her crew also produce *The Journal of Family Life*, which focuses on the growth not only of children but of parents and communities as well. For info about any of these publications, write 8 Elm St, Albany NY 12202.

John Holt's books are translated into over 14 languages now. In the course of negotiating translation rights for Holt's books into the various languages spoken in India, I developed a relationship with Arvind Gupta, a teacher and translator who has shared his inights about education with me in many letters. Several months ago he sent me a book called *Divasvapna* (Daydreams) by a man he considers one of the most important Indian educators, Gijubhai Bedheka. Bedheka was a contemporary of Gandhi (the book was published in 1932), but I felt it could have been written yesterday. Though fiction, it's rooted in the author's 25 years of teaching experience. His main character, the teacher Laxmishankar, is obviously based on the author. He is able to convince the British school authorities to allow him to be the boss of his own classroom for a year, as an experiment to see how the children could learn without following the prescribed curriculum or texts. Among many other things, he learns that teaching history just through the recitation of facts doesn't hold his student's attention. He decides to tell the students "stories from history, with a sprinkling of imaginary details, whenever possible," and he is pleased to see how much of the stories the students remember. Despite complaints from other teachers (because their own students are asking for stories too), Laxmishankar sticks to his approach. To help ensure that his students do well on the exams, he incorporates into his stories material that he knows will be on the exams. I found it interesting how he was able to balance the interests of the children with the need to "teach to the test" to please the school officials. This is just one of many ideas in this short, charming book. *Divasvapna* is currently out of print, but Arvind might be able to find a small number of copies (in English) if there is enough demand from GWS readers.

Arvind himself has written many books, including some clever and useful science experiment and crafts books for elementary school-age children. Written in English, these short books show how to do and make things using scraps and materials that are commonly found in our homes and neighborhoods. An added bonus for U.S. homeschoolers is that all the measurements are in the metric system, so we can use them as math materials as well. *Matchstick Mecanno*, *Little Science*, *Toy Bag*, and *Toy Treasures* are available for $3 each plus $2 postage per book. We can special order them from India (allow 8 weeks for delivery); please send orders for these books, or letters expressing interest in *Divasvapna*, to my attention.

Office News

[SS:] We continue to be busy planning and organizing our 20th anniversary conference, and you'll see further details on the inside back cover of this issue. Also, be sure to look at the information (at left) about our 20th anniversary issue of the magazine. All this planning gives us an interesting sense of the passage of time: I can well remember working on the *10th* anniversary issue of GWS, and some of the homeschooling teenagers I know best were born when GWS's first issue was being published. Both the conference and the issue promise to be special opportunities of celebration and reflection for all of us.

At the end of *Teach Your Own*, John Holt suggested that student teachers, or any young people interested in learning more about children and education, consider finding a way to live with a family so that they could get to know children firsthand in an informal way. Chris Davis, a first-year student at Friends World College, has recently begun interning at *Growing Without Schooling*, living with homeschooling families, and doing all the reading he can on the subject of homeschooling. This kind of self-designed immersion program benefits

We're planning a 20th anniversary issue – #118, the Sept./Oct. issue (which you'll receive in August, the month that issue #1 was published). As always, GWS relies primarily on you, our readers, to make a great magazine, so we invite you to write for this special issue. Here's some of the material we're looking for:

If you're a child or teenager or a grown-up homeschooler, tell us:

• One way that you think differently, about yourself or your education or life in general, because you are or have been a homeschooler.

• Or one scene or moment or experience that seems to you to be a perfect example of what homeschooling makes possible for you. Something that made you say to yourself, "That's why I homeschool," or "That's what freedom is all about."

• Or one thing you wish your parents, or your friends, or the general public would understand about your homeschooling life

If you're a long-time homeschooling parent, tell us:

• What you wish you'd known or understood about homeschooling when you first started. What would you like to tell your former self?

• Or one way that you, personally, have been affected by homeschooling your kids – one way your thinking has changed, or one thing you've done you never expected to do.

If you're a support group leader, local newsletter editor, or in other ways a homeschooling activist, tell us:

• One of your most vivid memories of working to spread the word or help lobby for or against legislation.

• Or one way that you have been affected or changed by this work.

We ask for one story or example because we're hoping to include many voices and so we ask everyone to speak briefly – but do be as specific as possible. Write any time within the next couple of months and no later than June 21. Be sure to let us know that you're writing for the 20th anniversary issue.

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both sides; as John pointed out, it can be particularly useful to single-parent homeschooling families or others who need an extra helping hand. If any of you try the experiment of hooking up with college students or students in schools of education in this way, we'd be interested to hear about it.

I would also be interested to hear from teenagers (or even younger children) who are facing difficult challenges – family problems, perhaps, or other hard times – but who choose to be out of school any-way. I'm not necessarily looking to publish these stories, and you can cer-tainly ask me to keep your name confidential if you prefer. But I have a par-ticular reason for wanting to gather stories like these: often, when I'm giving talks or otherwise discussing homeschooling, the question comes up, "But isn't homeschooling impossible for kids who have really stressful family situations or kids who are going through other difficulties?" Sometimes the question is phrased, "Aren't schools havens for kids who have really difficult family situations?" My feeling has been that although there's often some truth to that, a stressful family life doesn't in every case lead a student to prefer school. I would like hear from, or about, young people who choose not to go to school even if their family lives are stressful (whether due to illness, divorce, or whatever other problems). I would like to hear how such young people have created a positive life for themselves outside of school, and if they think there can be other "havens" for young people besides schools. I think these stories will be valuable in discussions of educational alternatives and specifically for young people who are now unhappy in school but who have been ruling out the option of homeschooling. So I look forward to hearing from anyone on this subject.

Calendar

April 25-27: California Home-Education conference at the Holiday Inn **Ventura Beach** Resort. David & Micki Colfax, Linda Dobson, Mary Griffith, Donna Nichols-White. For info: Diana 619-248-7631.

May 2-3: Oklahoma Central Home Educators' Consociation convention at Myriad Convention Center, **Oklahoma City.** For info: 405-521-8439 (press #2).

May 22: Rethinking Education conference in **Dallas**, TX. Pat Farenga speaking; books available for sale. For info: Barb Lundgren, 817-540-6423.

May 31: Pennsylvania Home Education Network conference at **Geneva College, PA.** Pat Farenga speaking; books available for sale. For info: Barbara Davis, 412-752-0302.

May 31: Rhode Island Guild of Home Teachers S. New England Curriculum Fair in **W. Greenwich, RI.** For info: Ivette Fantasia, 401-647-9274.

June 2-5: Homeschoolers week on the farm – ages 6-20. Hosted by Richard & Penny Barker, The Country School, 5221 TR 123, **Millersburg OH** 44654; 330-893-0008.

June 6-8: Clonlara Home Based Education Program national conference at Michigan State University in **E. Lansing, MI**. For info: Clonlara, 313-769-4515.

June 21-22: The Link (Kid-Comfortable) Conference in **West Lake, CA**. Pat and Day Farenga doing workshops; books available for sale. Also John Gatto, the Colfaxes. For info: Mary Leppert, 805-492-1373.

June 28: Unschoolers' Network conference at Brookdale Community College in **Lincroft, NJ**. Pat Farenga speaking; books available for sale. For info: Nancy Plent, 908-938-2473.

Aug. 8-10: Conference celebrating Growing Without Schooling's 20th Anniversary, at the Westin Hotel in Waltham (near **Boston**), MA. David & Micki Colfax, John Gatto, panels, workshops, discussions. For info: GWS, 617-864-3100. See inside back cover of this issue for registration form.

Aug. 22-24: California Home-Education Conference at the Radisson Hotel, **Sacramento.** David & Micki Colfax, Joseph Chilton Pearce, Mary Griffith, Donna Nichols-White. For info: Claudia, 916-927-6181.

Aug. 23-25: Home Education Resource Organization conference in **Columbus, OH**. Pat Farenga speaking; books available for sale. For info: Chris O'Connor, 614-852-7926.◆

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Young People's History Projects

There's more to history than textbooks, and, as these stories show, kids are coming up with varied and interesting history projects of their own.

Interviewing Refugees for Theater Production

From Ben Cisek of Wisconsin:

I had done very little theatre until last year, when I saw a flyer announcing that a local theatre group, the Greenwood Players, was creating a play called "The True History of the Hmong People." I had known of the Greenwood Players for years, because they're a well-known improv group in our area, and I had some friends in the group, so I decided to audition and I got a part.

We began with only a basic story line, and the goal was to create the rest of the show based on interviews with members of our local Hmong community. The Hmong community here in Wisconsin is the second largest in the U.S., second only to California. In our city we have about 5,000 Hmong in a population of 13,000 people. So participating in this project was a way for me to learn more about the history of a culture that was very prevalent in my area.

Conducting the interviews was an amazing experience. The cast of the play was made up of young people – about 11 of us ranging from age 13 to 18 (I was 15 at the time) – and most were Hmong themselves. Our first idea was to talk to the cast members' parents and grandparents, and then we also put the word out in the community saying that we would be conducting interviews for about four hours on a particular afternoon. About 100 people showed up, and we divided the interviews among the 11 of us and the two directors and one assistant director. I was one of three Caucasians in the cast, and we each paired up with a Hmong cast member to insure that the interviewees felt comfortable, especially when they preferred to speak in their own language.

We had come up with questions at a practice session, because we had broken the show into various areas that we knew we wanted to cover: what was it like living in Laos and Thailand, at what point did you have to leave, did you have to leave family members there, and so on. When I began, I didn't know much about these stories. I didn't know that these people had been forced from the mountain villages where they'd lived their whole lives, forced into refugee camps not knowing where their families were or if they were alive or dead. Some of the Hmong were suffering from illnesses from the chemical warfare they'd been subjected to, and most were then shipped off to America, which they didn't know anything about, leaving behind their peaceful villages to move into big cities. There was a lot of pain and loss, but most of them had the will to keep going. This was what was most inspiring to me, that they went through so much pain and suffering but were still willing to keep going and to live.

The interviews were challenging sometimes, especially for me because it was harder when they had to talk to Caucasians. Sometimes they weren't sure how to say what they wanted in English, so we would say, "Just say it in Hmong; we'll get it translated later." Sometimes we were afraid to ask the tougher questions – afraid to offend the interviewee or to bring back painful memories – but we needed to ask them, because we needed the emotion in the story we were trying to create.

The experience was a great lesson for me in improvisational theatre, in history, and in life. I learned much more than I could have learned just studying the history of the Hmong, and in fact, I learned that the local school just teaches what happened on this date and that date, but not the whole story. Part of the reason the group did this play was that there had been some tensions in the community between the Hmong and the Caucasians, and we were hoping that if the Caucasians had a greater understanding, the tensions would lessen..

Interviewing older people is a great way to learn about any kind of history. I've done work with other older members of our community, people who have lived in this area for years, and it's great to hear them talk about what happened in the past, who used to live in this area who's now famous, and that kind of thing. Our homeschool group meets every week at a leisure center – a place where older people can get meals and other services – and because we were meeting there, we got to know some of the older people and ended up doing some performances for them and doing some classes. In the course of having that contact with them, we had a lot of opportunities to hear them talk about what our city had been like years ago.

Researching and Creating Antique Costumes

From Katey Yoder of Maine:

My love of historical costume has its roots in my parents' interest in visiting historical places. They have always taken my brother and me to see wonderful old places and things. When I was 6, my family began to volunteer at Norlands Living History Center in Livermore Falls, Maine, where we role-played the lives of an 1870s farm family. I loved being at the old farm and dressing in historical costume. My grandmother and I sewed my Norlands dresses together. (My grandmother is my sewing mentor.

She sewed with me until I was able to do projects myself, and she still helps me to problem-solve my sewing questions.)

During the time we were at Norlands, I began reading the *Little House on the Prairie* series by Laura Ingalls Wilder. I loved those books, and my family helped me set up my own "little house" in a garden shed behind our house. We filled it with antique furniture, dishes, kerosene lamps. We even installed a hand pump. My friend Laura and I spent lots of time working and playing in the little house. We put in a wood stove so that we could cook and keep warm in the winter. Our play became more historically detailed, and we made quilts, knitted mittens and scarves, and taught ourselves to embroider. We read as many books as we could find about women's handiwork of the period. We were fascinated by the description of Laura Ingalls Wilder's hoop skirts, so I attempted to make hoops for us. The first hoops I made were rather crude and flipped up at inopportune times, such as when we were stirring pots of soup on the wood stove! This inconvenience spurred me into studying the construction of the antique hoops I was able to find. I also talked to women from the local Civil War Re-Enactors group, who offered suggestions and resources.

By that time, our little house dresses had become more elaborate. During my grandmother's next visit, we sewed an 1860s wool traveling dress from an antique pattern. This dress had a hoop with a circumference of 144 inches. I saw the dress in a fashion book from 1862, and we tried to reproduce it as accurately as we could. I helped Laura sew an 1860s dress as well. That summer, we spent quite a bit of time sailing about the yard in our huge hoops. Only one of us could fit into the little house at a time.

We so loved wearing the hoop-skirted dresses that we wanted to make others, and we wanted places to wear them. When I was almost 11, we went to a festival at Norlands, attended a Civil War Re-Enactors encampment, and volunteered that Christmas season at the Victoria Mansion and the Henry Wadsworth Longfellow House in Portland. For the Christmas events, Laura and I made elegant boned dresses of taffeta and velveteen. We researched the trims of the era, and made yards of rusching and soutache braid trims. It was winter, and we needed wraps, so we did more research and I made a paletot (a long coat), and Laura made a cape and a "Marie Stuart" hood. Laura and I have volunteered at Victoria Mansion's Christmas events for five years now, and we have made a new dress each year. For the past two years, several friends have joined us, and I have helped them to sew period-correct costumes, too.

At right, Katey Yoder poses in one of her own creations, a dress she sewed for this year's Christmas event at Victoria Mansion.

(On our cover, Katey and Laura wait to greet visitors to the Longfellow house, wearing their tafetta and velveteen dresses.)

When Victoria Mansion asked us to be hostesses at their Victorian Doll Teas, we decided to make bustle dresses from the 1870s, because the smaller hoops made it easier to maneuver around the tables. That led us to a new stage of women's fashions – and so it goes, one thing leads to another. I have made corsets, bustles, camisoles, pantalets, flannel petticoats, bonnets, mitts and tried to be accurate from the inside out, from top to bottom.

I have taught myself to research and make historical costumes. I have learned to show others how to sew and make their own costumes. I have learned a lot since I have had an opportunity to work in the public. Because of what I do, friends at our community theatre have asked me to make theatrical costumes, so I have experienced another whole area of costuming. I have worked with high school productions, community theatre, and professional productions. I have also been asked to make custom-tailored clothing, which I love and find very challenging. I have collected many pieces of antique clothing, to which I constantly refer. I'm 15 now, and people ask me if I am going to be a textile conservator, a theatrical costumer, or an historic clothing curator when I am older. I can only say that one thing leads to another and I'll just keep following this path which I love. I also have other passionate interests, including dance and music. Perhaps I will find a way to weave all of these interests together.

Fasting to Understand Concentration Camps

Julian Church (CT) writes:

I have been interested in history for a long time. When I was 4 or 5, my father started reading us a book of poems about the kings and queens of England. I liked the poems so much that I memorized a lot of them. My mother read us books about the middle ages, colonial times, and pioneer times, and my sister and I were fascinated by the idea of life long ago. We used to dress up as characters we invented from whatever time we were studying. When I was about 9, my mother gave me the book *The Devil's Arithmetic*, by Jane Yolen. It's about a girl who time travels back to a concentration camp. I was intrigued by the story and horrified by what people could do to other people. I read a lot of other books and articles about the World War II era, watched movies set in those times, and role-played 1940s characters.

Now I'm 11, and my interest has focused mainly on concentration camps. To learn what it was like to live at that time, I re-read *The Devil's Arithmetic* and read *Rena's Promise: A Story of Sisters in Auschwitz-Birkenau* by Rena Kornreich Gelisen, *Four Perfect Pebbles: A Holocaust Story* by Lila Perl and Marion Blumenthal Lazan, *Night* by Elie Wiesel, and *Five Chimneys: A Story of Auschwitz* by Olga Lengyel. I watched a video interviewing survivors and a video drama called "Holocaust." Some people think I'm strange for being so interested in this topic, but actually, learning about the prisoners' lives usually makes me feel grateful for my safe, rather easy existence.

Eventually, I wanted to have a better idea of what life really felt like for the camp prisoners. So I did some research to see what meals they would have eaten, and invited several of my friends to do a concentration camp diet day with me. Some of them said, "No thanks, but good luck." My 9-year-old sister Tory, my mother, two friends – Jane (11) and Kate (7) – and their mother agreed to try it with me. We planned to eat these meals: breakfast – weak unsweetened tea; lunch – turnip water and a small slice of boiled turnip; dinner - stale dark bread and a small smear of butter; any time of the day – water. I wanted to work outdoors barefoot, wearing flimsy clothes, but my mother said absolutely not (this was in February).

As the fasting day drew nearer, I subconsciously became worried about what hunger would be like, and thus became irritable. Consciously I thought that hunger would have effects only on my stomach and on my energy. During the day of the fast, I found out that being hungry affected my attitude and my feelings, too. I didn't expect this to happen. Another thing that made fasting hard was when some of my friends teased me and my "fellow sufferers" on the morning of the fast, by describing delicious foods.

In the afternoon, Jane and Kate came to my house and, while we were fasting, we played that we were Jews hiding in Poland, with false identities as Christians. We made several costume changes, false passports, and chose a Jewish and Polish name for each of us. When we tried to escape by train to Switzerland, we were captured by Nazis and sent to a concentration camp. This role-playing helped us take our minds off fasting, and having "fellow sufferers" helped me as well. Another help in getting through was knowing that we could eat soon and planning a big breakfast for the next day. The younger girls endured the fast for over 18 hours and Jane and I for 22.

While I was fasting, I realized several things. First, I discovered that one reason concentration camp inmates were so unhappy is that hunger makes people irritable and unreasonable, as well as dizzy, weak, and headachy. I don't understand how they could have endured hard labor on this diet, because I was tired just from playing. Also, I realized that things would have been so much worse if I had this diet every day and didn't know when captivity would end, and worse also if I were in danger of dying from starvation, sickness, or violence. Even after the fast, I realize that we don't know the meaning of the word hunger half as much as survivors of the Holocaust, or starving people today, know it.

And I never knew that an apple could taste so much like dessert!

Interviewing, Working at Historical House

From Clare Murphy (PA):

I'm mainly interested in medieval or ancient European history, but there are not many actual activities that involve that type of history in a small rural town in Pennsylvania. So I've had to settle for the modern in many cases, which, though not dealing with the same facts, allows me to perfect my skills of historical analysis. One way I did this was to start a column in "The Backpack" (the kids' section) in *PA Homeschoolers Newsletter* of interviews with older adults who had lived through major events. I got this idea because whenever I talk to one of my grandparents she always brings up her past – such as riding in a runaway carriage or picking coal from under railroad passes. I wanted to understand more of my past, and also to learn her perspective, and so I asked her about living through the Depression. I have a fairly good idea about times such as the Depression from books I've read and other "objective" sources, but doing interviews about those eras really shows the subjectivity of humans, how their hatred for a leader such as FDR or the hardship they struggled through affects their view of the events going on. My grandmother found the Depression a very hard time, a time that took the pride out of her and her parents, but she worked through it. She didn't have the overall view of a suffering world. I realized that it's impossible to fully understand history since every source is not perfect, even eyewitness accounts, and, of course, there's no way to see it for myself. I encouraged other homeschoolers to contribute interviews to the column but didn't get as many contributions as I would have liked. Though the column lasted only about two years, I learned how to interview and would like to continue interviewing my grandmother on other topics, preserving her perspective and a little part of history.

My involvement in uncovering modern history didn't end there. At 14 I started to volunteer as a docent at the local historical society, leading tours around the museum that con-

tained family artifacts, a Model-T Ford, Civil War uniforms, and other objects that people from the community had donated. Some of the people who came in for tours were tourists who were doing the "walking tour of Wellsboro" and so we were only seeing the sights; others were lifelong residents who had never seen the museum. Many others I directed, without getting up from behind my wooden desk, to the genealogical library.

Though most of my Fridays I would spend my four hours doing my schoolwork at the desk, occasionally asking someone to sign the guest book or going through a list of photos that the society had just gotten, I couldn't resist the display of books in one corner of the office that were histories of the county. I always wanted my talk on the tours to be as informed as possible and I would ask the curator the questions people asked me that I couldn't answer. These books gave me another way to augment my facts. Through them I learned of the founders of Wellsboro and how the town might not have been named after Robert Morris' wife, as the legend goes, and that Fallbrook, now a large grassy field, was once a bustling coal mining town. I would also listen in on conversations of people who knew the area well, as they talked with the curator, and I would pick out any points useful to me. I had a purpose to seek out this information, a place to use it and explain it to others, and actual objectives to relate it to. I could point to the window where the bank robbers came in the house in the early 1800s to wake someone to open the safe at the First Bank of Wellsboro. And as I laid these facts out to people on the tour, I also, in a strange parallel to my interviews, got information from them. Many older adults would tell me about their childhoods during the war or about watching a parade or going to a one-room schoolhouse. Thus I was able to get different stories of our town.

I had gotten this volunteer offer because my mother, as director of a small art and cultural center, knew the president of the historical society. Besides giving me this opportunity, this connection to cultural activities allows me to meet historians and others interested in history. I have met lute players, learned about and heard a sackbutt, and most recently talked with a professor who came to speak on the history of American diaries. But the most fruitful meeting was going to dinner with a professor in medieval studies. Once she had found that I was interested in history, she began to recommend books and also a conference on medieval studies at Penn State. A couple of weeks later I got a poster for the conference from her and decided to go. It was a day of lectures. Some of them were so fascinating that I took notes as fast as I could write on such topics as changing statue names to fit who was in power. Some of them also put me to sleep with their scholarly analysis and esoteric language. Yet I had an interest, however small, even in those talks since I was seeing the kind of people and the words that I'll have to deal with, though perhaps not emulate, when I go into that field. The night was rounded off by a medieval feast and concert, showing a different part of the culture I had been listening about all day. I plan to attend this year's conference on language and numerology in the Middle Ages. Getting up at 5 o'clock in the morning seems well worth it.

But I guess I don't always have to get up early to go to a "conference." The resources on the Internet are incredible, sometimes overwhelming me with what's out there and other times frustrating me by not having what I want. I used to belong to an ancient history newsgroup where scholars and lay people would argue about topics like whether Cleopatra could have been black and the whole "Black Athena" movement and would exchange information such as book titles. I couldn't handle all the e-mail and finally dropped it, but there are other online discussions like the one I just found on the History Channel homepage. This is one of the best tools for history that I have, putting me in contact with people and facts, discussions and texts.

Clare demonstrating a "rug stuffer" at the historical society

While these "hands-on" resources are wonderful and add much to my sense and knowledge of history, on their own they can't be the final word on the past. Books, by far, are the best resource for history. Information from books gave me a foundation to build on and reading magazines such as *Archeology*, *Smithsonian*, and *Civilization* keep me up to date on current finds and theories. Reading, and writing long research papers and short essays, have formed the structure for my historical explorations, a structure that has allowed me to take full advantage of yet another resource: museums. When I went to the Smithsonian this year I was able to absorb much more knowledge than I had on previous visits since I'm doing an in-depth study of American history. The information I had gotten from my reading had given me the big picture so that I was able to appreciate the little details.

History isn't like math or science where there's a problem or experiment that I can get my hands on. History's problems are not set proofs to be discovered but are constantly discussed, and its experiments are different theories on the use of a clay pot or the reasons for the fall of an advanced society. History is a word experience – stories about objects and lives. I had to find narrators to these stories and found that by talking to people, telling people, listening to people, and looking up people's ideas I had constructed my own narrator: me. ◆

How Parents are Changed by Homeschooling

The experience of listening to one's children and then speaking up on their behalf can affect parents in powerful ways. Here are some stories about how parents have become activists and have changed their thinking in all sorts of ways.

Advocating for Her Children

From Dawn Lease (MA):

My children have homeschooled since the fall of 1991. I found out about homeschooling after arguing for many years with the public school regarding my older child and how his needs weren't being met. It was only after taking my son out of school that we realized how our daughter was also being affected (in different ways) by the school system. We took her out of school two months after her brother started homeschooling.

I was very vocal about my son's school needs, but I didn't advocate for my children as much in other areas and indeed felt, looking back, that I listened to school officials and medical experts too much and assumed they knew what was best for my children in several areas. As I started homeschooling and met many people in the homeschooling community, I started understanding that some of the things I assumed I didn't have a say in were things in which I did, or should, have a say.

When my son first started homeschooling, I signed him up for a cartooning class at a local arts center. My son and I both assumed that he would be able to use the cartoon character that he had already created himself and that in the class he would learn how to draw it better and incorporate it into many different comic strip situations. It turned out that the kids did not get to use their own characters much at all. In fact, the teacher had them work with other characters and did not really notice that many of the kids were not happy with the way the class was being taught.

Now when my children want to take a class or when we arrange a field trip, I try to find out ahead of time what the instructor's style is like. If the instructor hasn't dealt with homeschoolers before, I try to explain that he or she shouldn't talk down to the kids, should talk to them in a respectful manner, should be ready to answer a lot of questions and should be willing to let the kids do lots of hands-on exploring.

I did offend someone once, by pointing out (privately) that I thought she was talking down to the kids. She was upset that I felt that way, but she said she did appreciate my telling her that.

I also speak out now when I think someone is being rude or abusive to my children. I let the school control that in my son's life for a while, and I was wrong to do that. When a woman's young child kept kicking my daughter in the back during an outing and pulled her hair when she spoke out about it, I changed seats with my daughter and spoke to the mother afterwards. The mother thought my daughter and I were overreacting, but I don't think it's right to let your children become victims and not speak out about it.

I speak out more now about my children's medical and psychological needs. I advocate more for them, and don't let the medical professionals give me a pat answer if I know in my heart and mind that they are wrong. I have learned to listen to what my kids say to me about how they feel and to listen with my mother's senses also, to understand when the answer the professionals give me is not correct. Sometimes it takes time to get the doctors to listen (and sometimes I don't persist enough), but I find if I can make them understand that the problem is not going away, and that it is something that needs to be looked into further, they will usually listen. Sometimes we have had to switch doctors to get the care we need (and deserve).

The fact that I have grown stronger in advocating for my children was really made clear to me this past spring, when we were visiting Walden Pond. My daughter and two of her friends were walking part way around the pond and were late getting back, so I was becoming a little concerned. As my daughter came back, she explained that a naked man had come out of the woods and had asked her to "watch, watch" as he did something in front of her. She and her friends went the long way around the pond to avoid the man, who went back the way they had come.

We immediately went to the office at the pond, and they took down some information and asked if we wanted them to call the police. I told them we did. The Inspector handling the case was very good to us and, to make a long story short, a suspect was eventually caught. My daughter was given three choices: not to press charges, to go to trial, or to do a version of mediation where she and I, the district attorney, the defendant, and his attorney would sit in a small room with a judge and discuss the crime and what the sentence should be. I made sure I listened to what my daughter wanted to do. She decided that she would testify in a trial, as she did not want to be in a small room with the man but she also didn't want to drop the case because she didn't want him to do this to her again or to anyone else.

Throughout the lengthy process of preparing for and then attending the trial, I had several opportunities to listen to and speak up for my daughter. For example, she had been offered the chance to write a victim impact

statement (which she did, on her own, with no suggestions from me), and she decided she was too nervous to read it aloud in court or to speak out in court. So when we got to court, I made sure they knew that she didn't want to speak. Except for a few questions the judge had, she didn't have to.

The defendant pled guilty and was sentenced to five years of supervised probation. He has to report to the court every 90 days and he has to stay in his treatment program and on his medication for the full five years. He has to make sure he is 100 yards away from minor children unless he is with an approved adult, and he has to stay away from Walden Pond.

I feel it was empowering for both me and my daughter to go to court. Soon after the incident happened, a good friend of mine, a homeschooling parent, organized a self-defense class for girls, and this was empowering to my daughter too.

I feel it is so important to speak out. I did speak out about some things before we started homeschooling, but since then I have gotten better at being an advocate for my children and for myself.

Learning to Live Her Beliefs

From Chris Sims (VT):

Already outspoken to a fault, I can't say that standing up for homeschooling has made me any more or less an activist. Instead, the homeschooling experience has led my husband (also a long-time activist) and me to be willing to take greater risks in *living* our beliefs – not just voicing them. Letting lawmakers and school officials know that we're not satisfied with current educational systems and opportunities is important, but it's also nice to be able to supply living proof of a better way.

In activism expressed by lifestyle, we have begun to question the disproportionate amount of power our nation consumes by taking steps to supply our own. We have one solar panel so far; it powers a compact flourescent lamp for three hours at a time. The next step will be to power a small barn. We don't have that barn, yet, but hey! Without teaching certificates, we can do a better job guiding our children's education than the school can, so can't we build a sound barn by ourselves, too? (Using ecologically friendly, renewable resources, of course.) Courage derived in part from do-it-yourself schooling has already given us the confidence to do other home improvements, so, honestly, building a barn doesn't seem like a big deal.

Eventually, we hope to run the entire house on renewable energy. In the meantime, our dryer used electricity, so we hang up our wash. Our lawn mower gobbles gas and puts out more fumes in an hour than the car does in two days, so we're giving over a large portion of our yard to "growing wildflowers and creating wildlife habitat." (That sounds so much nicer than just saying we're not going to mow!)

As for other areas of activism, we don't like eating pesticides, so we grow our own organic produce. We're also displeased with the hormones, antibiotics and other drugs we may be consuming in commercially produced animal products. Years ago, I did quite a bit of talking and writing on that subject and we drastically reduced our meat intake. Now we have made plans to put a few hens and a couple of milk goats in that new, solar-powered barn.

These may be quiet ways to protest the things we don't think are right, but living a protest isn't our aim as much as to simply demonstrate that alternatives are more than just ideas to kick around – they're workable. It certainly gets my attention to hear about how the world is running out of fossil fuels and how urgent it is to Do Something. I really sit up and take notice, though, when I hear of a whole family living happily and comfortably on nothing but wind and solar power.

Our family certainly isn't unique in this form of activism. I often read about homeschoolers who run home businesses, do home births and grow their own food. I also read a lot about modern-day homesteaders who also homeschool. Our country was most innovative during the era when its citizens were most independent; I'll be eager to see what happens with this next generation of independent activists!

Changing Her Ideas about Teaching

From Gwen Meehan (FL):

Like most, I believed the myth that only qualified, certified teachers could possibly impart the appropriate knowledge in the right sequence for children – all children – to be educated. I believed that in these complex times, what needed to be learned was so tremendously intricate that it required great specialization to be able to teach and many, many years to learn. My own mother had been a teacher. I could not imagine that I had any competence at all in that area.

I had chalked off my older boys' complaints, observations, and problems to what the school counselors assured me was the normal growth pattern of children in general and boys in particular. They were unhappy, rebellious, and resistant to the education process, especially our oldest son. He was always getting into mischief. "Quite normal," I was told. The boys kept complaining that the work at school was "stupid and boring."

Considering my own experience, I had to agree with them. I explained that "If you want to ride first class in the adult world, then you've got to have a first class ticket. The ONLY way to get that ticket is by excelling in school. You are being taught what you must know to be successful in our society." I really believed that, even though I had played the game myself, gotten good grades, etc., and discovered that almost none of what I had learned was worth anything (with the exception of shorthand and typing). No special ticket for me at all.

Many parents I knew admitted that their children were not happy with school and felt that what they were learning was irrelevant. "Oh well," they all said, "Remember that we were the same way. It is just something they have to endure, just as we did!"

It took our youngest son, Patrick, to teach me what may prove to be the greatest lesson of my life. His kindergarten experience was wonderful. Then came first grade. After a few weeks in school, he said, "These people don't understand how children learn." He went on to explain that you

can't teach something to someone who is not motivated. A person cannot be motivated if the material presented bears no relation to the potential learner's life. He said that the students weren't allowed to ask questions. He resisted going to school.

As time passed, he pointed out the inconsistencies: "A lot of children who are having trouble learning to read don't understand about books. No one has ever read to them. The way reading is taught is stupid and boring. I wouldn't try myself except that I want to read. I know how much fun books are and I want to be able to read them to myself. I could teach it better myself. I could show them how to get the children to learn to read." He said, "They aren't testing the black children for the gifted program. There are several in my class who should be going to gifted class with the rest of us!" I began to feel bad. What he was saying was true. My other boys had complained, but they hadn't been able to describe exactly what was wrong. Pat knew and was articulate. Furthermore, I had a lot of experience by then talking to other parents and students.

As time went on and Patrick felt more and more frustrated, we tried everything we could think of to alleviate his unhappiness. I talked to friends, counselors, psychologists, teachers, perfect strangers. All to no avail. In the middle of the seventh grade, he met a boy who became a friend. This boy listened to how unhappy Patrick was and suggested we homeschool. He told us that he had homeschooled and that it was not hard to do. We wanted our happy, healthy son back again, and my husband wanted a wife who was not crying with frustration. We decided to try it.

At that point I thought that in order for Patrick to progress properly I would have to see that he was really home "schooled." Institution-like, I designed a rudimentary curriculum. I would teach English and history and hire tutors for computer science, algebra, music theory and composition, and piano. We would also travel a lot. We bought a TV to use as a monitor with a VCR so that we could see lots of fine documentaries available through the library. Every day was a busy one for me, especially. But it was glorious fun.

I remember noticing that Pat was spending a lot of time day-dreaming and I took him to task for it. I accused him of wasting time. "There is no way to 'waste time,'" he said. Then he went on to explain that it was necessary to think a lot in order to do the music composition, computer graphics, and other creative endeavors that fascinated him. He wanted to be a video game designer. "Designing requires a lot of thinking," he told me. I could see that he was right.

My eyes were opening. I was beginning to understand that maybe my life did not have to revolve around trying to teach him things he didn't want to learn and probably didn't need anyway. I was feeling better and better. Both my thinking and my belief system were changing positively. Then Pat asked me if I would allow him to design his own education the next year (ninth grade). Pat, my husband, and I talked it over and the three of us agreed to give it a try. We even decided not to ask for an "agreement," a "contract," or anything else from our son. We would just trust him.

By the end of the year I knew I would never attempt to teach him again. I had changed completely. I felt wonderful. A weight had lifted from my shoulders that was almost palpable. For the first time in years I felt free! As the years passed and we saw what a perfect job our son was doing by choosing the right things that would prepare him to meet the future he envisioned for himself, we became more and more confident. My own health improved dramatically. I used to be sick often right along with Patrick. Until last week, when I went through a "touch of the flu," I have not had even a sniffle since 1987!

Have I changed? You bet! I regret that my older sons could not have benefited from the same experience. They have watched with great interest – and bittersweet frustration as well – as Patrick has emerged gloriously. He is a Software Architect for Nintendo at 20. His dream has come true. He qualifies as a video game programmer and designer and can work competently anywhere in the industry.

Our older sons intend to homeschool (unschool, actually) their own children or search for and enroll their children in Sudbury Valley-type schools. We have been responsible personally for many, many children's emancipation from school. I am sure that many more have left based on having read *Real Lives* (in which Patrick and ten other teenagers write about their homeschooling lives).

I also learned to trust my intuition, something I was reluctant to do before. It took me a long time to break the mold that deprived me of believing in my own ability to make decisions. ◆

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Handling Pressure from Others

Paula Tarbell of Illinois writes:

I really thought I had come to a peaceful place regarding our decision to homeschool our children. Sure, I had met with the usual opposition of other parents, grandparents, and authority figures. My husband, Jeff, and I have experienced both chilly silences and overt disapproval from many of the people in our life regarding this very personal choice. But when people offer their opinions about how children should be in school, I've mostly been able to agree to disagree, matter-of-factly state my beliefs or not pursue the conversation any further. Until I met a woman I'll call Margaret.

Margaret is an early childhood educator with *Parents as Teachers*. I started going to their programs to get my daughter and son, as well as myself, out of the house. Since our neighborhood is a veritable ghost town during the day, and there are no secular homeschooling support groups close by, I thought it would be good for us. One of their programs, "Parent Talk," is where parents go to an hour-long parenting class and the children stay with early childhood educators in a "gross motor room" and acquire "skills" (also know as "play").

It is the typical artificial environment where parents are separated from their children and the educators hover over the youngsters, trying to control their every move, warning them of imminent danger, and talking in that high-pitched, sing-songy voice that so many adults think children like or require.

Margaret started showing a particular interest in Nathan, who would normally be in kindergarten, after I told her he wasn't in school and that we were homeschooling. She'd often tell me how pleasant and bright Nathan was, and how well he got along with others. She'd ask me how homeschooling was going and what we did. She seemed dumbfounded when I tried to explain to her that we just do what we've always done, which is live our lives and pursue our interests, whether it's learning how to get dressed, or writing one's name, or reading *Charlotte's Web*. Education isn't a segment of our life; it *is* our life.

But today she looked at me straight in the eye and said, "You know, Paula, there is a wonderful all-day kindergarten in this building where they are doing great things. I really think Nathan would like it. He's so bright, I'm just afraid he's not going to reach his potential."

Maybe it was the years of opposition and judgments building up, maybe it was sitting for an hour (I stayed with the kids this visit instead of going to the parents' class) and watching grown women treat children like they can't do or think for themselves, or maybe it was her patronizing tone, but I got sucked into a position of defense and felt the hairs on my neck stand straight up.

I proceeded to tell her how much I hated grades and tests, and that my philosophy of learning is completely opposite to the learning philosophy of institutionalized education, and that homeschoolers do as well as if not better than schooled children, etc., etc. She countered with, "But how is he going to make it in 'the real world' [as if school is the only real world!], how is he going to take a test in college, and get along in a group, etc., etc..." Then I countered, she countered some more, until we both realized it was going nowhere, and

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went on to something else.

I left feeling angry and found it ironic that a program called *Parents as Teachers* couldn't wait to get my son away from me so that he could do some "real" learning.

Yes, my children and I do need more contact with others. Currently we are without a car during the day, but are taking steps to change that. And we need either to find or to create an unschoolers group so we can feel connected and supported in a lifestyle that seems so strange to others but very natural to us. Things aren't perfect, but school isn't the answer either.

Paula writes that she has since found a secular homeschool group and is enjoying the new friends, the field trips, and the philosophical validation.

More on Homeschooling Children with Autism

Jill Whelan (IN) sent us a copy of the letter she sent to Henry Lappen, who wrote in GWS #114 about his son with Asperger's Syndrome, a form of autism. See GWS #115 for other responses on this topic.

I am homeschooling our son Andrew, who has autism. Andrew is 11, and has all of the sensory sensitivities which you've described in Jasper, as well as more acute symptoms of the autism spectrum disorder. He is minimally verbal, has trouble with motor skills, has a very hard time socializing (although he loves people, especially adults, as long as he can interact in his own way). I have homeschooled him since the beginning because it just felt right, for us and for him. We also have a 6-year-old son who is homeschooled.

I think every parent of a special-needs child wonders if he or she is doing enough and from time to time questions the decisions made about treatment, education, etc. It's just so hard to know what will be effective, and we can't look into the future to see how it will all turn out. And since each child is such a unique individual, what works for one family may not work for another. Homeschooling has given me the chance and the freedom to try different things with Andrew that probably would not have been available to him in a school setting. I can follow his lead, and build upon his interests to teach him other things. I can work with him in his best times of day, which are not the typical 9-3 hours of school. He is able to be with the people who love him the most, including his younger brother with whom he would probably have no relationship at all if he had been away at school most of the day. And since many autistic children tend to have a hard time generalizing from school to home and back again, he is learning in a setting which is more consistent. He is part of a community and interacts with it daily, so that when he is older, the transition to adulthood will hopefully be less difficult. This is a benefit of home-schooling *any* child; I believe it is especially important for a child with autism.

Andrew does not seem to demand rigid structure in his life (lucky for me!), but he does like to know what is going to happen and when. From early on, I have used calendars and schedule boards to keep him informed of the day's activities, and that has worked well. This also helps him choose the activities, since he sometimes can't vocalize them without a visual prompt. Detailed schedule boards were more important when he was younger; now a general schedule of the day is sufficient, probably because he can keep it in his head longer.

Andrew learns best in a one-on-one situation, with minimal distraction. Obviously, this would be hard to duplicate in an integrated classroom of twenty kids! We don't have the money for private therapy, and our school district does not provide the types of therapies which I want for Andrew (sensory integration, vision therapy, horseback riding therapy). In the past I've consulted with therapists to help me set up programs for Andrew which I would then implement, and this has worked well for us. I've learned a lot from talking to teachers and therapists, ordering materials and books to educate myself, and attending conferences. I have managed to find grant monies for at least part of the horseback riding

therapy (which is the one thing he really loves). Also, Andrew participates in programs for homeschoolers, such as swimming lessons, with me acting as his aid if necessary. He has a broad range of experiences available to him through homeschooling, and I don't feel he is missing a thing by not going to school. When I hear the other parents in my autism support group complain about IEP meetings and their school districts' policies, and about how their children complain and act out over going to school, I feel that I've made a good decision for us, at least for now. Of course, there are days when I think the six hours of free babysitting would be nice, but when I weigh all the options, homeschooling still comes out on top.

From Peg Wysong of Washington:

I'm a homeschooling mother of two children with Asperger's Syndrome. My daughter is 12 1/2 and my son just turned 11. My daughter was diagnosed at age 3 and my son at age 7. My daughter had three years of public school special-ed. for preschool and kindergarten. My son had 1 1/2 years of co-op preschool. That was enough for both of them.

We have homeschooled since then. Academic assessment on both of them shows them to be doing fine. They both excel in reading and math and lag in areas requiring fine motor skills. As avid readers, their general knowledge base probably exceeds that of many adults. My son has had about five minutes of formal instruction from me. He is totally self-taught about anything he wants to know. My daughter, at times, appreciates formal instruction in some of the basic academic skills, but only at her request.

They both have specific interests. My daughter likes horses, crafts, and ancient Egypt. My son likes Legos, computers, and a series of books called the Redwall books. Together the children run a very successful and profitable business involving dog walking and cat sitting. They've been in business for two years.

Both my kids, though different from each other, have symptoms that would still get them labeled with Asperger's Syndrome. She is sensitive to stimuli, he has problems with social nuances. There are more symptoms, but we are so used to them and to each other that it now becomes hard to pick out specific symptoms.

I have found most professionals' labels and proposed treatments to be very unhelpful. Two exceptions were a wonderful therapist and a neurologist. The therapist came to the house for years for sensory integration therapy with each child. The neurologist, who knows a lot about these kinds of kids, is very personable and we see him annually. But in general, I decided that I knew the kids best and that we could manage their behavior and their homeschooling if we were willing to be very broadminded and creative in our thinking. A lot of flexibility and sense of humor are called for too.

We have had great success in using homeopathic remedies for behavioral issues. My son's behavior is now socially acceptable and my daughter is enjoying not having such dramatic mood swings. I don't know why these remedies have worked; I'm just glad that they have.

These two kids are challenging, there's no doubt about that. I sometimes long for "normal" kids. But I would have missed out on so much, so much of watching them grow and become the wonderful kids they are. A lot of my own personal growth would not have happened without my kids being as they are. ◆

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Jonathan, at age 7, worked on infinite series (see Ch. 2). This work is on Don's videotape #1.

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Focus

Self-Evaluation:
Young People Describe How They Evaluate Their Own Work

In Dance: Using Mirrors and Tapes, Asking Questions

From Shauna Edson (CA):

I'm 13 and I love to dance. In dance, evaluation is very important. At the studio, there are mirrors on the walls, so I can correct myself and watch myself for mistakes or things I'm doing differently from the other dancers. In ballet, there are about fifty things I have to think about at once, so it's helpful to be able to look in the mirrors and see what I'm doing. I can also evaluate myself by looking at the older girls to compare what they're doing to what I'm doing.

In addition to studying ballet, I'm on a jazz dance competition team. On the team, every little thing must be perfect, so evaluating ourselves is even more important here. I look in the mirrors and compare my steps to the other girls'. I also ask dozens of questions of our teacher, who can see us all at the same time. I can't always watch myself in the mirror, and I can't always see how I look compared to the rest of the group, so the teacher's comments are useful. But it's not just that she is evaluating me; I can also evaluate myself through her responses to my questions. And sometimes, the team members can help each other by asking the teacher a question and letting everyone else hear the answer. For example, sometimes when we're doing a certain movement with our legs, we forget how our arms are supposed to look, so I'll ask her about our arms, and then the rest of the girls hear the answer and we start thinking like a team. This team has been together about six months, and over the course of that time, we've started thinking like a unit, not just like individual dancers.

Another way I evaluate myself is by watching myself on videotape. At one point, we had someone come in and tape the team doing the two dances that we're preparing for competitions. I saw lots of things I could improve, and things I'm doing correctly. So I could evaluate my dancing by comparing what I think I look like to what I really look like.

Videotapes also help me evaluate my progress over the years. We have videos of my dance performances almost every year since I was 7 or 8. I look at them and say to myself, "Wow, I wasn't as good then." Now I'm much better at dancing with everyone else rather than just dancing to my own drummer. And I've gotten better at many technical aspects of ballet, too. It's easy for me to see this progress when I watch the videotapes.

Observing Progress in Reading, Drawing, Writing, Acting

From Anna Ritter (NY):

A little more than a year ago, I was reading easy reader books. I have improved since then. Now I've read a lot of chapter books, and what chapter books I read now are different from the first ones I read. Then I only read one or two pages at a time and now sometimes I read two chapters or more at a time. So I can see that I have made progress in reading. I got tired of reading easy readers and wanted to read something more interesting. I decided that I should start to improve my reading. Now it's really fun to read.

I like drawing, especially drawing families with lots of kids. Sometimes I look at my drawings and think that I did one good person but the other person isn't that good. I try to think of that when I draw another picture. I draw a lot of pictures to get better at drawing.

I go to an acting class and in it we play theatre games. We do improvisation too. Sometimes after I go up to do an improv, I feel like I didn't do a very good job. I feel that way if I don't think I was funny enough or if I just couldn't think of enough ideas. So next time I try to do something different so I can do a better job.

I also like to write. I have written some little books as presents for people and illustrated them. Sometimes I use invented spelling when I don't know how to spell a word, but mostly I do know the spelling. I wrote a little play and now I think I'm going to make it a better play. I wanted to make it funnier and more exciting. I evaluate a play I've written mostly by whether I think it's boring or exciting. I like looking back at work I've done a long time ago, not just to evaluate it but also just to remember that I did it.

I sometimes ask people what they think of my work. But mostly I think about it myself and try to improve things that I want to do better.

Looking Forward and Looking Backward

From Jeremy Young (AZ):

I don't feel it's absolutely essential to evaluate my skills, but I do find it helpful. I like seeing how far I've come and I enjoy setting goals.

In some things, I measure my progress chiefly by looking forward. Take drawing, for instance. I think of something I want to draw, which looks in my mind like a Monet or some other masterpiece. However, the finished drawing doesn't look like any sort of famous painting. When I first started drawing, I expected to create Van Goghs and then wanted to stop drawing altogether when I didn't succeed. I finally learned that I had to modify both my goals and my skills. Realistically, I'm not going to be a Seurat or a Picasso any time soon. So I had to teach myself to go for something I could reach. I used a process that I've found to be useful for almost anything creative: first, I choose one goal that seems very easy and try to achieve it. Then, once I reach that one, I choose another one, go for it, and so on. It's like a skyscraper with steps that I have to climb to reach the "top floor," or the ultimate goal. I can also decide that I've gone as far as I want to in art or whatever I'm doing, and stop before I reach the top floor. (Actually, I think the "top floor" is more a myth than a reality because you can always improve your skills no matter how good you are.) This system has really helped me, and using it I improved from drawing stick figures to a pleasing cartoonish style. I learned that the more reachable my goals seem, the easier it is to achieve them and go forward.

For many other things, like writing stories, I *don't* usually evaluate my progress by looking forward. When I was 5 or 6, I thought my stories were as good as any grown-up's, even though they were like, "Orange juice reminds me of oranges." (That was it, the whole story!) Now I'm 12 and much more modest, but I still feel largely the same way. Because of this, I don't often look forward on my writing, but I do look back. I can see a clear difference between my 38-page report on ancient Rome and "Orange juice reminds me of oranges." I can even see differences between the poem I revised last week and the original version, which I wrote last year.

My progression is too slow to be watched as it happens, so I have to look backwards to see it, but my baby sister Meredith progresses so fast that I can see her learning from one minute to the next. When we first brought her home, she didn't know how to do anything but eat and sleep, and even then she had trouble eating because she couldn't suck. Soon, though, we could see her sucking better, and when she finally got the knack of that she went on to her next challenge. One day we saw her looking around, something she had never been able to do before. Then she learned how to roll from her back to her side, and began grasping things. Tomorrow she'll probably do something else that she can't do today.

Since I don't progress as fast as Meredith, it helps me to look backward and see how far I've come. However, I think it's more important to look ahead, because that helps me set goals. I value both ways of evaluating my skills.

Jeremy Young enjoys observing his own progress and his baby sister's, too.

Comparing Old Work to New

From Amber Weller (RI):

I believe that evaluating my work is a natural part of my everyday life. I don't say, "Hey, it's time to evaluate myself"; it's not so deliberate, but more a natural outcome of any activity I may pursue. Whether I'm reading, writing, playing golf, drawing, practicing my martial arts, or doing conventional schoolwork, there comes a moment when I step back and assess my performance. Sometimes it's just a fleeting moment when I think about how well or how awfully I did. Other times, I compare my old work with my new, to see how I've improved. I might also compare my work to the work of someone I admire. In some cases, I turn to other people whom I trust for their truthful criticism, input, and encouragement.

Take my artwork, for instance. When I finish a piece, I look it over and see how I did. Sometimes I'll say, "Wow, that's pretty good." Other times I'll say, "I could use a little work on that." On occasion, when I want to see how I'm coming along, I look back at some of my earlier drawings and compare them with my new work. Usually in an instant I am able to see how I've improved. When I'm frustrated or stuck in a rut with my drawing, I look to other artists' works for inspiration and direction. I am very much into the comic and animation arts, and there are many professional artists that I look up to. By referring to their works, I get inspired to keep going. Never giving up is half the battle. With this boost of confidence, in a little while I'm back on track.

Sometimes I have trouble evaluating my drawings. I want some input other than my own. That's when I take the drawing to my parents, brother, sister, grandmother, aunt, or art teacher. They give me positive criticism and encouragement. They aren't afraid to tell me if I need to work on something and that helps me improve. Going to other people is good; you need someone to bounce things

off of at times.

I think we are all born with the skill to evaluate ourselves, and by living and learning every day we sharpen that skill. But abusing the tool can sometimes be dangerous. When you evaluate too much, you may forfeit the enjoyment of the activity you're involved in. Also, evaluation should never make you feel bad about yourself. But if you're always negative towards your own work, you're always going to give yourself a negative evaluation, which can make you unhappy. If you have that negative attitude in your mind, then nothing you do will satisfy you. But if you evaluate with a positive attitude, you'll give yourself a boost of confidence. I said earlier that I sometimes get encouragement from comparing my work to others', but on the other hand, I also try to recognize that I'm an individual and have to give myself time to progress at my own pace. At times, it isn't easy to remember this.

I try to save all the work I really care about so some day I will look back and see how far I've come. I don't save everything I've ever done, just the work that really means something to me. I keep a portfolio of my artwork and save my creative writing on the computer. I have my martial arts tests on videotape. I know in the future I'll be glad I saved these things so I can look back at my achievements. I don't save them just so that I can evaluate myself; I save them because my work is a part of me and it's natural for me to want to keep these memories.

Learning How to Evaluate Artwork

From Grace Ritter (NY):

Recently I had to evaluate my artwork when I was planning on sending a drawing to the International Youth Art Exchange, which is a program where kids from all over the world send in a drawing or painting and it could possibly be sent to someone else in a different country. I had three pictures I was considering sending in, but I couldn't make up my mind which one to send. The way I finally made up my mind was that I looked at all three pictures, saw the reasons I liked each of them, and picked the one that had the most of the qualities I liked.

The thing that I find hardest to evaluate by myself is acting, mostly because you can't see yourself act. I'm not exactly sure how I evaluate my acting, but somehow I do, because sometimes I feel better about a performance than at other times. I guess it's just listening to myself.

I take a class at a ceramics studio, and I have kept almost all of my work. I have pieces from the day I started, up through pieces that came out of the kiln yesterday. Of course I have gotten a lot better at ceramics since I started. When I first started, I didn't realize the things that were wrong – lumpy sides or whatever. After I got better, I began to see the things I didn't like about my bowls, and I found ways to make them better. Also in pottery I have to decide if I want to keep the piece or not. Some days I don't make anything I like, so I just recycle the clay.

Really, though, I don't think that I am very good at evaluating myself, because I'm not very good at making any kind of decision – like choosing what kind of ice cream I want. But I do get kind of annoyed when someone else tries to evaluate my drawings. After all, they don't know what I wanted my picture to look like anyway.

Testing Himself in Math, Flute

From Zack Shuman (PA):

When I was in my fifth grade homeschooling year, I started using the Saxon 76 math book. I did every problem in every lesson. I was really bored and frustrated, so I got only about half way through the book that year. I skipped sixth grade, so the next year, in seventh grade, I did the second half of the Saxon 76 book. I started doing two lessons a day, but I did only half the problems. That wasn't as boring, but the book says you *must* do *every* problem or you won't retain the information. I wasn't sure if that was true, and I wanted to evaluate my progress so I could see if I was doing OK even without doing every problem. In eighth grade, I did Saxon Algebra 1/2. It comes with tests for every fourth lesson. I found the tests very helpful for evaluating my progress. Saxon books have a lot of review at the beginning, so I used the tests to see whether I had retained what was being reviewed. I got a very good percentage correct up to the test for lesson 40. After that, I went rapidly downhill. The tests had been a good way of evaluating myself without having to ask anyone else how I was doing.

Starting with lesson 40, I read three lessons each day and did only the problems in the third lesson. I finished that about a year ago. At that point, I decided to focus more on studying the American Civil War for a while, and then I moved on to other things. Even though I haven't really worked on math since then, I haven't come across any math problems in day-to-day life that I couldn't solve, and I even surprised myself by scoring 600 in math on a practice SAT. So these have been other ways of seeing for myself that I am doing fine in math. I plan to start Saxon Algebra I in about a month. I intend to use the tests to see if my approach – reading all the lessons but doing only some of the problems – worked. Assuming it did, I'll do Algebra I the same way – unless I get bored!

When I'm playing the flute, I find that for some things I can evaluate myself, and for others I need help. For instance, I know how well I'm doing the finger exercises; if my fingers are in the wrong place, I don't play the note. I use a metronome with most of my finger exercises, so I can look back and say, "Oh cool, I'm doing these twice as fast as I was two months ago!"

To see how well I'm playing a song, I just listen to a tape I have with all my songs on it, or play the song at a lesson and get my teacher's feedback. But as of yet I'm not a great judge of picky things like fine tuning and pitch, so for now, I ask my mom or my flute teacher for help with those. In terms of how well I'm doing in general, i.e., "Have I made enough progress on the flute since last November?", I don't really have a way of evaluating myself beyond saying, "Whoa! Three months ago I was really only playing *that* exercise *without* the metronome, learning *that* song, and I didn't know *any* upper register notes!" But hey, it works for me. ◆

Rethinking Discipline:
A Conversation with Alfie Kohn

The author of *Punished by Rewards* has done it again. He's written another book that is not about homeschooling but is nevertheless deeply relevant to the concerns of GWS readers. Kohn's new book, *Beyond Discipline: From Compliance to Community*, offers a critique of discipline programs that aim to control children and to elicit desired behaviors. He suggests, instead, ways that adults and children can work together to figure out how they want to behave and what kind of community they want to create.

Below, Kohn explores questions about how adults can best respond to common "discipline problems," what happens when children are allowed to make choices, how people become responsible and compassionate, and what "self-directed" really means.

Susannah Sheffer: What made you turn your attention from rewards to discipline?

Alfie Kohn: I got a letter several years ago from a woman working on a book about the progressive educator Sylvia Ashton-Warner. She asked me if I thought that a program called Assertive Discipline would be around long enough for her to justify spending a chapter offering a critique of it. Assertive Discipline, for homeschooling parents blissfully unaware, is a collection of bribes and threats designed to get students to mindlessly obey rules that the teacher has unilaterally devised and imposed. Its originator claims to have trained close to a million teachers, and it's been around for more than 20 years. Anyway, this woman's question was whether she should make a point of critiquing this program. My first reaction was to say, by all means critique it, because hundreds of thousands of teachers have never been helped to reflect on what is undemocratic and unhelpful about such a system of control.

But then I rethought my initial reaction and realized that Assertive Discipline itself was not the problem; the problem was rewards and punishments more generally. Then I thought about it further and realized that even rewards and punishments were not the ultimate problem – which is an odd thing to say when you've just written a 400-page book on rewards and punishments. But I came to realize that the problem was control – the assumption that the adult must have control over the children and get control of the classroom. As long as that belief persisted, programs like Assertive Discipline could vanish tomorrow but by next week there'd be something just like them to take their place. So a lot of my thinking, since writing *Punished by Rewards*, has been about issues of control and compliance: whether we want a kinder, gentler way to get kids to obey us or whether we want to rethink that very objective. In other words, the problem may be less with the means – like rewards and consequences – and more about the ends.

Yes, I remember being very struck by that distinction when I first read John Holt's Instead of Education. *He says, "The problem is not one of means but of ends," and at first that seems odd, because most of the talk in education seems to be about means – "how shall we do it?" But, as you say, it's important to go beyond that question to ask, "What are we trying to do, and is that a good thing to do?"*

So, you said the problem is in the underlying attitude. What are the assumptions underlying most discipline programs? What's in teachers' minds that makes them worry, above all, about losing control of the classroom?

Part of it is a matter not just of their own value system but of the expectations and structures foisted upon them. Teachers are routinely evaluated on the basis of how well they have the classroom under control. Moreover, there's often an informal ethic in school suggesting that something is wrong with that colleague over there in room 203 where it's noisy and the desks aren't in rows and the kids don't line up before they go to lunch. So it asks a lot of a teacher, for institutional reasons and not merely psychological reasons, to give up that sense of being the authority in the classroom who makes all the decisions. Routinely, classroom management texts begin by saying that the teacher should very clearly and firmly lay out her expectations for the students and the consequences that will befall anyone who violates those expectations.

I think all of this misses the point in a big way. Kids learn to be responsible and compassionate by making

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decisions, not by following directions. The process from the very beginning has to involve children in thinking for themselves, and with each other, about what constitutes fairness, about why honesty matters, about how their actions affect someone else. This is in direct contrast to typical discipline approaches, which essentially train children to focus on themselves, to think, "I should do what the adult expects because of what the adult will do to *me* if I don't." You find this in books about parenting just as much as in books about classroom management; almost all of the books are about training children to do what you expect. This is not called into question; the only question is how you can most effectively secure that compliance.

It's so illuminating to realize that most discipline approaches encourage kids to focus on themselves rather than on anyone else. That means these approaches actually work against the idea of helping kids to think about how their actions affect others.

Yes, the question that kids are led to ask is, "What do they want me to do and what happens to me if I don't do it?" This is, frankly, the lowest stage of moral development, and yet it's one that is underscored every time we use a punishment. The same is true of rewards or praise. In that case, the question the child is led to ask is, "What do they want me to do and what do I *get* for doing it," which is not that different from the first question. But both questions are very different from, "What kind of person do I want to be?" or "What kind of family or classroom do we want to create?"

It seems to me that the assumption that underlies what you're talking about is that kids generally want to do right, want to act sensibly, as opposed to the all-too-common notion that kids are just little monsters whose natural inclination is to act terribly or anti-socially.

A preschool teacher once apologized to me about the fact that her kids were acting like kids – which is to say they were running around and laughing. She said, "Give 'em an inch and they'll take a mile," and I thought to myself, "This is true mostly for people who have only been given inches in their lives." If kids do take advantage of freedom, it is normally a reflection of their having been overcontrolled in the past, rather than some dark feature of human nature. I think that's what your question is getting at: a theory of human nature underlies any assumptions and practices concerning discipline. If you ask most teachers straight out, "Do you honestly believe that children are little tyrants who have to have morality and concern for others shoved down their throats?", relatively few would endorse that statement, and yet many practices presume it. Even praise assumes that children would never do anything decent unless they were given positive reinforcement for it. So I think we have to look at what our practices presume, and see if that's really what we believe or want.

Kids learn to be responsible and compassionate by making decisions, not by following directions.

My vision may not be as romantic as some, because I don't believe that all children, left to their own devices, will grow into morally competent, concerned people. I think it's more complicated than that. Adults have an important role in modeling for children, and guiding them, and helping them to experience the effect of their actions on other people. But I do believe it's as natural to help as to hurt. I don't think it's our nature only to be destructive.

This confusion about "left to their own devices" comes up a lot in discussions of the type of homeschooling we're talking about at Growing Without Schooling, because people often say, "Are you saying that, if left alone, kids will learn what they need to know, or turn into decent people?" But in an important sense, none of us is talking about leaving kids alone – without adult help, support, modeling, as you say. Kids are living in a community of people, and of course they're surrounded by adults who are letting them know how we do things here –

– and *why* we do them.

Yes! So maybe people are objecting based on something that isn't even an accurate description of what you or others are saying.

I was going to ask you to give a concrete example of a way adults can respond to a child in a situation that would classically be thought of as a discipline problem.

Well, take the example of a small child who kicks another child. I think we have to make it clear that that is not a good thing to do, but our primary focus should be on communicating the reason that it's not a good thing to do. Rather than suggesting that we don't hurt others because Mommy will get mad, or because it violates some rule that was imposed at the beginning, we can suggest that the issue is how it makes the other kid feel. We could say to this small child, for example, "Remember when you fell down those stairs last week and hurt your leg, and you were crying? I think that's the way you've made Max feel right now. What do you think you can do to make him feel better right now?" Obviously the language has to be adjusted as kids grow older, but the point is that if we remind kids in a non-punitive fashion of how their actions affect others, in general they will want to make people feel good rather than bad.

You're taking the risk of assuming that, which is interesting.

Well, I'm assuming it in the context of this conversation, but I'm actually basing it on a fair amount of research that supports this more benign view of children, which I reviewed in a book called *The Brighter Side of Human Nature*. In any case, this approach isn't a matter of simply saying, "Don't hurt kids," nor is it about saying, "Do whatever you want." The point is to make it a less self-oriented thought process that the kid engages in.

I also found interesting, and useful, what you said in Beyond Discipline *about looking at what's really going on in a situation, looking for the deeper explanation of why a child is "misbehaving." I loved the story about the teacher who was irritated at the kids who never lined up after recess until she finally gave them a chance to tell her what the problem was, why this was so hard for them to do in that particular situation. It seems like this sort of thing could come up at home as well, that a child would be causing trouble repeatedly or resisting a particular thing, and a deeper look at the situation could change the way it went.*

Regardless of the resolution of the particular problem, the process of helping kids to reflect and argue is the real value of that kind of encounter. It sends a message that kids' objections and preferences matter, that we are taking them seriously. And that's hard to do when a child loses it in the supermarket or refuses to get out the door in the morning, but at a later, quiet time, there really is no substitute for working *with* kids to figure out what makes sense. We ought to ask, "Why do you think this happened?" and then follow it with, "What do you think we can do about it?" That has to be done in a serious way, not in a perfunctory way where the kid understands that she's really just supposed to guess what's on her mother's mind and come up with the approved solution. And it has to be done when there's enough time.

I also found your distinction between self-disciplined and self-directed fascinating, especially in light of the discussions that go on among homeschoolers. When I think about the way you use the words and then apply them to discussions of children's learning, it seems to me that a self-disciplined child might be the kind who does her homework right away just because she's a good student and does what's expected, whereas the self-directed child actually has her own reasons for doing things.

Yes, a lot of people describe children as "self-disciplined" when what they mean is that the children do what's expected even when no adult is watching. Drawing from research by Richard Ryan and his colleagues at the University of Rochester, I find it useful to think about the difference between *internal* and *intrinsic*. If you're "internally motivated," you may act without being told to but you don't necessarily feel a sense of choice or commitment to a given action or value. Think of workaholics, who don't need someone standing over them with a carrot or stick, but who work joylessly, because they have simply swallowed whole the control that was originally on the outside. But the alternative is to help kids develop a genuine sense of a task as interesting in its own right or, in the case of how they act, to see themselves as making a choice to act in a particular way. The difference between internal and intrinsic lies in the reason for doing that particular action.

That makes me think of people who ask me how the homeschoolers I know are different from kids who go to school. One thing I often want to say, though I don't always say it, is that their reasons for doing things are different. It's not just about whether you can write a good essay but why you're writing it: because you want to be a good student and do what's expected or because you yourself have reasons for wanting to write that essay. And I find that this is one of the hardest things for a lot of people to understand; they can't even imagine that kids could have their own reasons for doing things.

Well, I think that's often because of what those things are that kids are doing, in so many classrooms and perhaps even in some homes. This is something I say early on in the book, that a major reason students look like discipline problems is because of how dreadful and tedious the curriculum is. But I have never found a book on classroom management or school discipline that begins by asking about the curriculum. Teachers talk about kids being "off-task" – that's a big buzzword in educational circles – and they look for tricks to get them back on task, whereas my first question would be, "What's the task?"

I wanted to come back to the issue of choice, which, as you can imagine, comes up a lot among our readers. What is the risk for the adult in letting children make choices?

Losing control! Part of that is difficult for almost any of us, especially when we are accustomed to thinking that folks who are shorter than us should be doing what we say. Part of it comes from a suspicion that, given choice, most kids will choose badly, which gets back to the human nature question.

And a lot of people seem to have the notion that although eventually children will grow up and make all sorts of choices, they shouldn't prepare for that by making choices while they're children.

Yes, although it does help to realize that the kinds of choices offered to a 2-year-old, which are circumscribed and might involve picking from a few adult-devised options, are different from the sort of choices that should be offered to kids as they get older, when they should be generating their own options. Secondly, children must be free in many cases to make choices that we don't feel are ideal. Of course, there may be certain things that are nonnegotiable, and we should make that clear from the outset. But it's a charade when a child is told that he can choose but then has that opportunity snatched away when he makes a "wrong" choice.

Then there's something that's common to many of these packaged discipline programs, which is pseudo-choice. The adult says things like, "Would you like to finish the reading now or would you like to do it during recess?" This of course is not a choice

She said, "Give 'em an inch and they'll take a mile," and I thought to myself, "This is true mostly for people who have only been given inches in their lives."

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at all, but it uses the language of choice to disguise what is really just control again, because it says, "Do what I tell you or else I'm going to punish you by taking away something that you like." Or they say it after the fact, as in, "I see that you have chosen to take a time-out." This frankly turns my stomach; now we are not only punishing the child but trying to get her to believe that she wanted to be punished, so she turns her wrath on herself. It's very convenient for the adult.

A lot of the problem in all this has to do with the focus on behavior. Whenever I hear parents or teachers talk about changing a child's behavior, I have a sinking feeling, because I know what's coming: bribes and threats. To me, behavior is not the point; what matters are the motives and values that lie behind a child's action. As long as we frame the issue in terms of just changing the behavior, we have no reason to work with children and bring them in on the decision-making process. If you want to get your child to open a book, then pay her off with a sticker or a pizza. If you want your child to love reading and to do it on her own, on the other hand, you would never dream of doing what research shows undermines interest in reading. By the same token, if you are interested in simply getting a child to stop hitting when you're around, then you should use a variety of behaviorist gimmicks. But you would never dream of doing those things if you wanted kids to develop a commitment to responsible actions and a concern about others, because those techniques actively interfere with helping a kid not only to act in a decent way but to *want* to do so when we're not around.

A lot of that has to do with time, it seems to me. The child who is preoccupied with those questions of "What do they want me to do and should I do it?" is a child who doesn't have as much time to think about other questions like "What kind of person do I want to be and how do I become that person?" I don't mean to overly romanticize homeschoolers here, but I do see homeschoolers reflecting on this very thing. When they're looking back on their lives as they write college application essays or just talk to people, I've heard several say things like, "Homeschooling has given me the time to figure out who I want to be."

More than time it might be something like "psychological space."

Exactly. And it takes a lot of patience on the part of the adults to offer that space and wait for the results.

Yes, parents need patience, and time, and skill, and care, and talent, and courage, to help kids develop strong values over the long run. Whereas to get kids to act in a particular way, by using a reward or a consequence, takes no time, and no skill or courage. So it's tempting, as any parent or teacher knows.

One more thing. There's a question that people often put to homeschoolers, especially those that have grown up in a particularly free, self-directed way, which is: what about the workplace? There's a sense that in the workplace, and even in other aspects of adult life, one is going to have to obey, to comply. The funny thing is that homeschoolers are often doing just fine in the workplace or even in college. They'll say to me, "Why are the other kids so concerned about whether to do what the teacher or the boss wants?" So these questions seem to me to have a lot to do with what we think adulthood is –

– and what we think the workplace is. You know, my first response, when people ask me about moving from competition to cooperation and from extrinsic to intrinsic motivation, is to say that management wants people who can cooperate and can engage in critical thinking and so on. But I think we have to push beyond that to acknowledge that there are massive problems with our workplaces and with our society more generally, such that kids who are fully functional, psychologically healthy, autonomous and compassionate, may indeed find problems from that very health when they are in dysfunctional and controlling situations. They can be viewed as troublemakers.

But that doesn't deter me from promoting these kinds of values, because I don't think these values should stand and fall based on how well they serve our society's institutions. I think the reverse should be true. Nevertheless, there *is* a critical component to raising kids who are not simply compliant. People may be discomfited when kids truly are not only able but willing to think for themselves.

Yes, I agree, and at the same time, part of what I was saying before was that sometimes there's a misconception that kids who have been brought up not to automatically comply will somehow never comply, will never do anything they're asked or even told to do. But in my experience, they're actually the ones who have the least trouble just doing what's necessary in a situation. They're not playing all those games of "should I do it, should I go along or should I rebel," and so on. Homeschoolers in college, for example, will tell us that they don't understand why so many other students are busy trying to get around the requirements or get away with not doing things. Some of that comes from having decided to be there in the first place, so I wonder if that can work even for the corporate world – once you've decided to be there, you may not go on to play all those games.

Right, and as we said before, the reasons are important, so the issue is not just doing the task, but why. A child may grow into a responsible and mature adult who says, "It makes sense to do this right now even though I don't like it." Holt said, and Piaget said it before him, that traditional punitive discipline creates either automatons or rebels; in both cases, people who are lacking the wherewithal to reflect on whether to do something and why. The assumption that kids who are given enough choice will grow up to thumb their noses at us reflects a remarkable misunderstanding of psychological principles. The people who feel the need to react in a knee-jerk fashion by opposing whatever they're asked to do are the people who have been told, rather than asked, for much of their lives.

Beyond Discipline is available from the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1-800-933-2723, press #2. ◆

Watching Children Learn

Deciding How to Work on Algebra

Julie-Ann Trudel (VT) writes in response to the Focus of GWS #112, "Am I Doing Enough?":

Because I was going into eighth grade this year, my mom said that I should work more on algebra. I was excited to be learning something that was so complex, but I was used to being a self-directed learner and I wasn't sure I liked the idea of working from a textbook. (When I call myself a self-directed learner, I mean that I learn through living, reading, and asking questions. I pursue what I'm interested in at the time and I go by my own schedule, rather than one somebody sets up for me.)

At first, the lessons in the algebra textbook were too easy, too long, and too boring, so Mom suggested that I do one out of every three problems. That worked better. Then the lessons got harder. So hard that it took me two to four days to do one lesson. That was when I thought that maybe I wasn't doing enough math. If it was this hard for me, was I practicing enough?

I had an idea about how to find out for sure whether or not I was keeping up. I wrote to a pen-pal who goes to school and asked her to send me last year's tests (she's in ninth grade). When I did the algebra test she sent me, I found out that I was doing just fine. The test was hard, but the only things I got wrong were the things I hadn't studied yet.

Also, I know someone in my area who goes to school and is in my grade. When I asked to see her algebra homework, I saw that I was actually ahead of my peers locally.

What I learned through these experiences is this: I am keeping up. And even though I use a textbook, I can still choose my own schedule. I can use the textbook to my advantage without having the rest shoved at me. What I learn, I remember, because my mind is clear when I choose to study. My peers in school complain that they hate algebra and their teachers too. I enjoy math, and although I didn't choose my two main teachers (my parents), I don't think I could ask for better.

A Self-Directed Young Musician

Naomi Aldort (WA) wrote in GWS #113 about how her son Lennon focuses on an activity for an intense four-month period and then moves on to something else. One of those activities was music, and Naomi wrote, "At age 3 1/2, Lennon played the piano for four months and left us spell-bound by his talent and then puzzled by his loss of interest in music." We asked Naomi to tell us more about Lennon's musical development, and she wrote:

When Lennon, at 18 months, used to sit in my lap at the piano listening to me play classical favorites, I had no thought about his having special talent. Even as he recognized each piece on the printed page, nothing crossed my mind in that regard. I was doing what he wanted. One child asks to read books, another likes to run around, and Lennon likes piano.

Lennon's interest, however, was unusual. When I played a certain piece, he would turn the pages of our very thick collection book to look at the page that had that song. He would turn the pages to a piece he wanted to hear and point at it. (Lennon was completely non-verbal until age 2 1/2 and then spoke in complete sentences). Most of the time, I played the chosen piece, and he then found and pointed to another one. Sometimes, out of curiosity, I played a different piece. Lennon reacted immediately. He was either furious or he frantically turned the pages and found the piece I was playing.

He had his favorites. I played, at his request, about 20 pieces or so at each sitting, but often I had to repeat one or two of them over and over again, sometimes ten or twenty times. One day, he pointed to a book of songs from *My Fair Lady*, opened the pages, and pointed to a song. I played it. He pointed again and again and again. I disliked this song so much that I just couldn't do it any longer. I took the book out of sight, and we went back to Bach, Purcell, and Mozart.

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Lennon Aldort playing the piano at age 6 1/2

Two weeks later, Lennon picked up a binder with copies of songs I used to perform. He browsed for a while in silence and then, to my amazement, pointed to the song from *My Fair Lady* in its very distorted-looking poor copy. I considered the possibility that this was pure coincidence and played a different piece that he had never heard before. He was furious. I tried another one. No way. I then played the right song - 19 times.

At 2 1/2, Lennon abruptly started talking in full and clear sentences. At the same time, he knew all the letters, all our states and their locations (he did the U.S. puzzle), could count and write numbers over 100, and could add. All this occurred without any teaching other than responding to his requests for play, counting, piano, etc. He also started to dance with an elaborate choreography, on the beat, and in response to the moods of the music. When all this exploded, I started to wonder about Lennon's special talents. I did nothing other than respond as I had, and I watched curiously.

When Lennon was 3, a friend visited for a few days. Lennon was playing on the piano, messing about in his own creative way. He was using his fingers and actually sounded melodic. He did not bang. My friend was surprised that I was not teaching him "to really play the piano." I reassured her that there is no way I can be as good a teacher to him as he is to himself. I was responding to his requests, he was watching me and a student I was teaching, and I was confident in his self-directed development.

At 3 1/2, now a middle child with a new brother, Lennon again surprised us as he had with speaking. One day he went to the piano and slowly but surely figured out the right hand of a Mozart piece that my student was playing. I said to my husband in the kitchen, "Are you listening?" and he said, "What – Julie's piano playing?"

"It's not Julie, it's Lennon," I told him.

"Oh, come on," he said, but he came around to see. Lennon figured out the whole song and was playing it rhythmically and smoothly with three fingers of his left hand.

Two days later, he started to play a piece by Purcell. I doubted he could figure that one out because it was counterpoint, with no repetitive structure, and was in a minor key and used the black keys. But he did, and he now asked me for help for the first time. He wanted me to show him the other hand for both the Mozart and the Purcell. I don't refuse my son help, but I still doubted that this could materialize into a harmonic, hands-together performance. Lennon told me how much of the left hand he wanted me to play and then he asked me to leave. By the time he had the whole left hand part, he was already putting it together with the right hand, without help. This was amazing to me because there were different rhythms to fit and counterpoint to coordinate.

Within four months, he had mastered seven classical pieces and numerous songs, improvisations, and compositions. This essentially means that with exposure and having his questions answered, he taught himself to play the piano. His desire was burning. He played on every keyboard that crossed his path and drew fascinated crowds of admirers.

At the end of these four breathtaking months, Lennon moved on to his next interest, leaving the piano behind. This was a difficult parenting test. The pressure from family and friends was immense: "He needs a specialist, a master teacher"; "You need to make him go on"; "How can you let this go?" My ego was on the line as well. Although I made sure not to make a fuss about Lennon, besides my obvious enjoyment of his magic, I became attached to the showing off. Being the mother of a genius performer was definitely stroking my pride. Yet I knew that this was not a reason to direct someone else's life.

Lennon's new occupation was puzzles, and I trusted him. Puzzles could be paving the road in his brain for what was to come in music. He was so young, so why rush? And how did I even know that music was in his future?

After puzzles came four months of amazing dancing to all kinds of music. After that ceased, he played outdoors, was full of fears, and swore he would never play the piano again. (His fears were of the dark, of animals, of certain strangers, and of sounds – he was obviously very aware and sensitive, and the fear of sounds is interesting because he heard things no one else heard.)

At 5 1/2, he came back to the piano. He started playing melodies of songs with ease. Then I showed him a

few basic chords; that was all I did. Now he was playing any melody that passed by his ear, with beautiful chords, in a variety of ways. Improvising and composing flourished as well. He had no desire to perform for other people, but he played and enjoyed himself. Four months – and then he stopped playing again.

Now Lennon is 6. He does many striking things, and blows our minds with his understanding of science, space, and numbers, as well as his reading and writing. Recently he mastered a Bach 3-voice piece and composed a few pieces that were not simple to write down due to jazzy rhythms. Yet he plays the piano only randomly and shows no strong desire for it. Based on the pattern so far, we could expect him to take the next musical leap at 7. But growth has no such pattern, so I learn to marvel with curiosity and without expectations.

Lennon says a clear "no" to lessons, while his older brother, Yonatan, is one who is learning well through lessons. At 8, Yonatan asked for violin lessons, took them for seven months, played well, and was satisfied. He learned what he was interested in and found that he was not interested in going further with the violin. Now, at 10, he takes piano lessons with delight and consistency. So he and Lennon have different approaches. I respect Lennon's lack of interest in lessons and am amused by his confidence in his own direction. He teaches me daily the lesson of trust. If he is destined to become a musician, in freedom, nothing will stop him.

Young People Work Together on Projects

Richard Barker (OH) writes:

I've been involved in the project approach to learning for years in my work with young people at The Country School (our summer farm program), but I was nonetheless reinforced and pleased to see the approach mentioned by one of my favorite thinkers/writers, Edward de Bono. de Bono is the author of *I Am Right, You Are Wrong* and *Handbook for the Positive Revolution*, and he originated the concept of lateral thinking. His definition of a project approach is a simple one that matched my own: "A group that collects together with the specific purpose of carrying through a particular project. All the energies of the group are directed, constructively, toward this purpose." In our Amish neighborhood, this is known as a "frolic."

The really exciting thing, for me, was to see these words actualized in work undertaken by homeschoolers. Last February, my daughter Maggie (22) gathered homeschooling friends Maggie Adams (18) and Bridget Mroczkowski (17), along with two of her brothers, Ben (19) and Jonah (17), to take on the 1996 Rocky Mountain International Sled Dog Race in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. The team of 14 dogs, raised and trained by Maggie, were raring to go, but there was a ton of work to be done before this project could be effectively carried out. I was there as photographer, which gave me a terrific perspective from which to watch these five young people, with cooperation and good will, do everything from evaluate load capacity and space limitations of their truck to pay bills, arrange accommodations, and feed themselves. All the while, they were constantly working to keep warm in minus 50 degree temperatures and giving topnotch care to the dogs. This meant checking the dogs' feet several times a day, running them in the high elevations with the sleds to keep their conditioning up as well as maintaining the human-canine rapport so important to a working dog. Tasks were distributed and carried out; a good race was run and everyone felt happy and satisfied at the completion of the event. As Bridget said, in spite of the often grueling work in the cold, "This is the most fun I've ever had in my life." It was truly an exciting adventure for all.

More recently, I saw a tamer project carried out by a group of homeschoolers with the same good will, warmth, and effectiveness as the race. Along with my sons, Ben and Jonah, California homeschoolers Shaun (16), Ryan (16), and Maggie Adams, and Bridget and her 14-year-old sister Maria Mroczkowski, joined me for a month's "frolic." I had three goals in mind. One was to complete the annual

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mailing for our summer program, which I send out each win-ter. The second, to balance our day, was to do physical work at our recently purchased farm in preparation for our new summer teen program. And third, I wanted these young people to have a satisfying social experience.

They not only accomplished the goals but, during the five weeks they were gathered, they cooked and fed themselves, kept their environment in good order, and even put on a wonderful Thanksgiving feast for ten!

One thing that impressed me was the way they adjusted their work each day so as to incorporate whomever might join them, since other homeschoolers, and sometimes schooled kids, would occasionally join them for the day. Rewards for the five hours of work put in each day were that their groceries were paid for, their vehicles were supplied, and living quarters were provided: a large, warm, cozy farmhouse. Most of all, they had each other's company and loved just being together.

These two successful projects remind me that homeschoolers have the time that allows for this kind of experience. There is also a certain attitude that I find in homeschoolers and of which de Bono speaks. That is effectiveness, or setting out to do something and doing it. Without the myriad constraints of classes, teachers, and curriculum, these kids can discover their own effectiveness in the world, reinforced by others until it finally becomes a habit. De Bono writes that employers will always hire an effective person before another and that he, himself, admires effectiveness more than intelligence. As I watched these young people meet the challenges of the projects set before them, I understood exactly what he meant.

High School Part Time

Julie Anderson (OR) writes:

Virginia is 16 and is attending our local high school part time (four classes). She started with three classes a year ago. That was her first experience ever with any kind of school. She had never studied science in any formal way, with a textbook, before. She came into a year-long Biology class in the second semester and her teacher ended up nominating her for "student of the year" in Biology. He was so impressed with her attitude and love of learning.

This year she is taking Chemistry, Zoology, Botany, and Computers and had three A+'s and one A. This from someone who avoided all those years of factory education and pretty much did what she felt like doing at home, which was to read books of her own choosing. She is glad now to be learning science from teachers at the high school who really enjoy and are knowledgeable about the subject, but the overall lack of joy and companionship and community spirit in the school is very depressing.

Virginia's two younger brothers are still homeschooling full time. Matthew (15) attended three classes at the high school last semester (mainly to try school and in conjunction with playing freshman football), but one semester was enough for him. ◆

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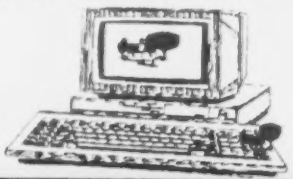

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Opportunities
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Indiana University's Independent Study Courses

We've received information about Indiana University's Division of Extended Studies, which offers over 170 high school courses for homeschoolers to take independently from home. Some of the courses are dual credit, which means they can count as college courses. (IU also offers an associate's or bachelor's degree program that can be done entirely through independent study.)

We haven't yet heard from anyone who has direct experience with these courses, but the titles look as though they would be likely to interest some of you; there's everything from computer science to writing fiction to sociology to calculus (and even a non-credit course on overcoming math anxiety). For more info, call 1-800-334-1011 or write Indiana University, Division of Extended Studies, Owen Hall 001, Bloomington IN 47405-5201.

Seeking Writing from Teens

Two high-quality publications published by homeschooling teenagers are seeking new material.

Windchime, a literary magazine edited by California homeschoolers Melissa Bicheler, Elizabeth Records, and Rosemary Records, is holding two writing contests for writers aged 12-18. The short story contest has a deadline of May 8, 1997, and the essay contest has a deadline of September 30, 1997. (The essay contest asks you to write about the themes of changes, challenge and adventure, or acceptance. "We're looking for well-written, interestng, original essays on any or all of these themes as you interpret them," the editors say.) For further guidelines, write Windchime Magazine, 70 Raymond Hts, Petaluma CA 94952, call 707-765-9969, or send email to ERecords@aol.com.

The Inkwell, edited by Tennessee homeschooler Dori Griffin, is looking for all sorts of material, but particularly short stories, from writers aged 12-19. *The Inkwell* also publishes a column called "Scribbles" in which contributors write about their work and reflect on the writing process. *The Inkwell*, 920 Kennington Hills Dr, Hixson TN 37343.

Street Theatre in Europe

Monica Menduno (CA) writes:

I'm a homeschooling teenager and this summer I'm going to be traveling in Europe, starting in Italy and working my way all over. I thought it would be great to put on street theatre, and I'm looking for people who'd be interested in doing this with me.

I have done stage managing and assistant directing, and I am currently trying to produce, direct, and perform in a fabulous play by Joyce Carol Oates. I write profusely – plays, monologues, movies (as well as other things) – and I would really love to perform what I have written. I was thinking of performing monologues, dialogues, scenes, vignettes, one-acts, and the like that we write or have already written. Because summer is the "in" season in Europe, I'm sure it won't be difficult to find an audience. I'm also interested in doing other projects – a documentary, for example, and any projects anyone else wants to do. We can of course make some money doing this, and there are plenty of youth hostels and campgrounds as well where we can sleep.

If you're interested or want to discuss other details, call or write Monica Menduno, 10291 Johnson Av, Cupertino CA 95014; 408-253-2103.

Visit or Work at Farm in Ecuador

Betti Sachs writes from Ecuador:

A year and a half ago, my husband, our two daughters, and I moved from New York City to a mountainside in the Andes of Northern Ecuador to open an ecologically oriented inn and farm. Our daughters, Maya and Sofia, are 11 and 6. They are being educated in the wonderful environment in which we find ourselves, without formal schooling.

When we lived in New York City, the girls attended an alternative public school and were lucky to have had excellent teachers and a fairly open classroom setting. As a result, when we moved they missed the hustle bustle of their school, especially the friends they made there. Both girls are very social by nature and would love to have the same huge network of friends here that they had in New York. They have made some and continue to make new ones. They enjoy spending time with our guests and they even get to practice new languages with foreign guests. Fortunately both girls came to Ecuador already fluent in Spanish, as my husband is Ecuadorean and has always talked to them in Spanish, but they are also interested in learning French, German, and Italian, and have already picked up words and phrases.

For my husband and me, this has been a radical but exciting change in our lives. I was a legal and society lawyer in New York for 16 years, and Diego had a Spanish translation and editorial services business, which allowed him to work at home. We did homeschool Maya in first grade, when she refused, with good cause, to attend our local school after the first week. We had always planned to homeschool once we moved to Ecuador, a plan which took us four years to realize.

We have fields where we grow corn, wheat, quinoa, and alfalfa, and we have a large vegetable garden. Our animals include six horses, which we use for guided mountain trail rides, four llamas, three dogs, and, at the moment, nine puppies, two cats with kittens, and a varying number of rabbits. The girls have been fascinated by watching and learning to care for

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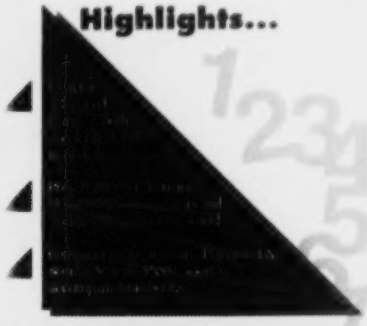

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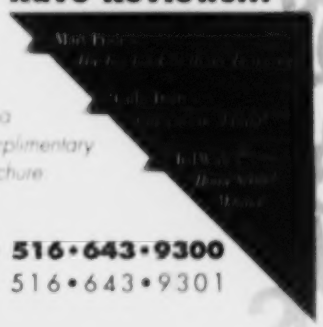

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the animals.

We call our inn Casa Mojanda, and we have organized the Mojanda Foundation, a not-for-profit organization, in order to undertake projects of social and ecological importance. We are helping to open a rural medical clinic with an emphasis on public health education and traditional as well as western medicine. We are also helping the local elementary school, which has 80 students, approximately half mestizo and half Quechua- and Spanish-speaking Indians. We have raised money to buy a good selection of books, paints, maps, and school supplies for the school and for my daughters. A homeschooling teenaged friend of ours and I plan to volunteer at the school one or two days a week to work with the first and second graders, who at present have no regular teacher. We are also planning an ambitious project to help preserve the high Andean cloud forests in the Mojandan lakes region, which are in danger of being cut down for firewood and burnt for charcoal by subsistence farmers in search of income and perhaps a small patch of minimally productive land. This project will involve offering alternative employment to those whose livelihood depends on selling firewood and charcoal. We hope to offer employment in the area of ecotourism, creating and maintaining trails, guiding hikes, and protecting instead of destroying forests. Of course this will require an intensive educational campaign on the importance of preserving and protecting the treasures of our natural environment.

We would be interested in hearing from homeschooling families and individuals who have skills to contribute and would be interested in volunteering on one of our projects in return for room and board. We also welcome homescholing families as guests at Casa Mojanda, and we are prepared to offer a substantial discount to families interested in longer stays, especially in return for work. We would be glad to assist those interested in studying Spanish or Quechua and can help arrange home stays. If interested, please contact Betti Sachs and Diego Falconi, Casa Mojanda, Apto 160, Otavalo, Ecuador, phone/fax 593-9-731737; email mojanda@uio.telconet.net. ◆

Additions to Directory

Here are the additions and changes that have come in since our last issue. Our complete 1997 Directory was published in GWS #114.

Within each state, families are listed in zip code order, so that readers can find others in their area and travelers can find hosts in a particular region. If you're looking for someone by name rather than by region, skim the last names, which are printed in capital letters.

Our Directory is not a list of all subscribers, but only of those *who ask to be listed*, so that other GWS readers, or other interested people, may get in touch with them. If you would like to be included, please send the entry form or a 3x5 card (one family per card). Please take care to include all the information - last name, full address, and so on. Tell us if you would rather have your phone number and town listed instead of your mailing address (we don't have space to list both).

If a Directory listing is followed by a **(H)**, the family is willing to host GWS travelers who make advance arrangements in writing.

If a name in a GWS story is followed by a state abbreviation in parentheses (e.g. "Jane Goldstein (MA) writes...") that person *is* in the Directory. If the name is followed by the entire state name (e.g. "Jane Goldstein of Massachusetts writes...") then that person is not in the Directory. We are happy to forward mail to those whose addresses are *not* in the Directory. If you want us to forward the letter without reading it, mark the *outside* of the envelope with writer's name/description and the issue number. If you want us to read the letter and then forward it, please enclose another stamped envelope.

When you send us an address change for a subscription, please remind us if you are in the Directory, so we can change it here, too.

Please remember that we can't control how the Directory is used; if you receive unwanted mail as a result of being listed, just toss it out or recycle it.

AK — Larn SPENGLER & Steve BEHNKE (Megan/92) 4545 Thane Rd, Juneau 99801 **(H)**

AZ — Mark & Danetta MECIKALSKI (Aaron/84, Jordan/87) 7580 Calle Sin Desengano, Tucson 85718 •••• Greg McGARY & Wendy LOWE (Jordan/92) 5008 W Placita de Los Vientos, Tucson 85734-9235 (change) **(H)** •••• Karen RASKIN-YOUNG & Bill YOUNG (Jeremy/84, Meredith/97) 4403 E Rustic Knolls Ln, Flagstaff 86004 (change)

CA, North (zips 94000 & up) — Kimberly DOMINO & Buck HALLEN (Nathaniel/91) 1580 Oakhurst Av, Los Altos 94024 •••• Renee & Andrew ANKER (Zachery/90, Dagmar/92, Astrid/94) 1790 Reliez Valley Rd, Lafayette 94549 **(H)** •••• Margaret PEVEC (Monica/81) 10291 Johnson Av, Cupertino 95014 •••• Susan GOYA (Jonathan/86, Timothy/89) PO Box 848, Tuolumne 95379 **(H)** •••• Tom & Nicole BLEES (Melina/84, Shanti/86) 32567 Mill Creek Dr, Fort Bragg 95437 (change) **(H)**

CA, South (zips to 94000) — Sandra & Paul KATZ (Natalie/88, Benjamin/90) 3008 E Black Hills Ct, Thousand Oaks 91362 •••• Eric & Cher TOWNSEND (Sean/80, Melissa/85) PO Box 1085, 54240 Strawberry Valley Dr, Idyllwild 92549-1085 (change) •••• Monique & Mark CYMERINT (Samantha/93, Brigitta/95) 7 Talega, Rancho Santo Margarita 92688

CO — Wayne & Monica WIITANEN (Amy/76, Catherine/83, Corey/86) PO Box 879, Paonia 81428 (change) **(H)**

FL — Jami WEINSTEIN & Brian DECKER (Tyree/90, Kiva/92) 734 Buttonwood Ln, Boynton Beach 33436 **(H)**

GA — Jill WOLFE & Jeff HERBST (John/78, Jeffrey/84, Jacqueline/88) 6473 Hwy 140, Woodstock 30188 **(H)**

IL — Kristin & Mark PODEMSKI (Caitlin/91,

Jessica/95) Stephenson County HOUSE, 2210 Countryside Ln, Freeport 61032

KS — Bob & Gay BARKER (Kate/88) PO Box 216, Chanute 66720-0216 **(H)**

KY — David & Leslie PETERSON (Ben/88, Hannah/90, Ariel/95, Ian/96) 1233 Brightleaf Blvd, Erlanger 41018

LA — Judy & Mick GAMBOA (Miguel/81, Sarah 84) 504-893-4528 (Abita Springs)

MD — Rene & Bob BANE (Pallas/90, Tucker/93) 12108 Quick Fox Ln, Bowie 20720 **(H)** •• Kirstin BARDOFF (Jacob/88, Aaron/95) 4 Spring Creek Way, Baltimore 21234

MA — Susan & Rene THEBERGE (Suzanne/78, Stephan/80) 250 Shutesbury Rd, Amherst 01002 •• Deborah SMITH (Richard/87, Leila/89) 35 Church St, Holliston 01746 •• Kimberly & Jonathan SARKIN (Curtis/88, Robin/91, Caroline/94) 108R Main St, Rockport 01966 (change) •• Nina & Paul HATHAWAY (Lara/92) 127 Lakeview Av, Cambridge 02138 •• Don & Mary PARTINGTON (Ben/92, William/94) 57 Ailanthus Av, Somerset 02726-3203

MI — Ariana ARLEN (Kennan/86, Willow/91) 1756 N Maple Rd, Ann Arbor 48103 **(H)** •• Jeff & Debbie BAILEY (Chloe/90, Jason/93, Amber/95) 39339 Marne, Sterling Hgts 48313 **(H)** •• Roger & Carla BLOOM (Geoffrey/88) PO Box 219, Lake Ann 49650-0219 (change)

MN — Patti & Greg LUKE (Kiah/87, Dakota/90, Cedar/92) 4702 McCulloch St, Deluth 55804 (change) **(H)** •• Linda WINSOR & Andrew PROKOP (Louis/84, Evan/87, James/91) 708 Goodrich Av, St Paul 55105 (change) **(H)** •• Theresa CHIDESTER & Jeff HASSKAMP (Winchester/90, Remington/91) RR 3 Box 110, Aitkin 56431

MT — Katie PERRY & Rich WALKER (Alex/90, Ian/93, Maria/96) Independent Homeschoolers Network of Bozeman, 415 South 9th Av, Bozeman 59715 (change)

MO — Corliss & George SCHAEFFER (Forrest/86, Melody/89) HCR 64 Box 221, West Plains 65775 **(H)**

NH — Harry & Stephanie WOODLEY (Sophia/82) 51 Holman St, Laconia 03246-3017 •• Sally EMBER (Merlyn/80) 284 Water St, Keene 03431 •• Mike MUNDY & Theresa LOCHNER (Molly/91, Kieran/94, Ian/96) 34 Hardscrabble Ln, Lyme 03768 (change) **(H)**

NJ — Bernard GROVEMAN & Barbara ANCONA (Tamar/86, Ethan/88, Benjamin/89, Hannah/91) 11 Shawnee Rd, Short Hills 07078 **(H)** •• Laura KRAJEWSKI & Marc PETERMAN (Sarah/92, Julia/95) 7 Hull Av, Freehold 07728

NM — Judith THOMPSON & Ari MAAYAN (Sarah/77, Yoni/80, Tal/83, Joel/83, Ariel/85) 1117 Rockrose Rd NE, Albuquerque 87122 **(H)**

NY — Linda & Bill GRACE (Jaclyn/89, Adam/92, Lauren/95) 3573 Moyer Rd, N Tonawanda 14120 •• Lindsay & Mark CATLIN (Peter/84, Andrew/89) 1415 Hogan Rd, Webster 14580 (change) •• Theresa GEORGE & Howard HINNANT (Tasha/87, Benjamin/90, Eli/93) Ellis Hollow Creek Rd, Ithaca 14850 **(H)** •• Michele LeBLANC (Deana/86, Taj/92) 7475 Willow Creek Rd, Trumansburg 14886 (change)

OH — Maureen & Bob DIEDERICH (Nicholas/91, Caroline/96) 4357 Baintree Rd, University Hts 44118 **(H)** •• Debra & Stephen BURES (Sarah/88, Hannah/91) 1085 Mattingly Rd, Hinckley 44233 **(H)** •• Jeanne & Eric SMITH (Daniel/88) 1112 Oakland Av, Akron 44310 (change) •• Kim THOMPSON (Benjamin/87, Erin/91) 1548 Spring Lawn Av, Cincinnati 45223 (change) **(H)**

OK — R.C. & Vicki MORRISON (J.P./84) 17025 East 174th St S, Bixby 74008-7524 **(H)** •• Jack & Maggie CONNOLLY (Sean/85, Jackson/90) 240 E 28th St, Tulsa 74114 **(H)** •• Brenda HENSON (Jeremy/78, Rachel/81, Joshua/83, Bethany/90) PO Box 104, Spiro 74959

OR — Paul & Kathy SCHERTZ (Amy/88, Dylan/93) 18130 SW Ewen Dr, Aloha 97006-3848 **(H)** •• Zarifah & Glen SPAIN (Nathan & Jemila/93) PO Box 40655, Eugene 97404 (change) •• Rick & Debi HAAS (Hezakiah/84, Drew/90, Marshall/93, Salona/94) 31619 Gowdyville Rd, Cottage Grove 97424 **(H)**

SC — Sam SAVAGE & Nora MANHEIM (Jeremy/82, Emily/85) PO Box 10, McClellanville 29458 **(H)** •• Candice McCOLLUM (William/94) 759 Garden Lake Dr, Garden City 29576 **(H)**

TX — Steve & Beverly RUSSO (Gunnar/77, Paxton/81, Brody/85, Griphed/89, Chandler/92) 308 E Reindeer Rd, Lancaster 75146 (change) **(H)** •• Sabine SCHAEFER (Terrance/89) Rt 4 Box 1285, New Caney 77357 •• Jodi & Andy HICKS (Maggie/89, Patrick/91, Joseph/94) 901 Lazy Ln, Bryan 77802 **(H)** •• Jason & Lisa BOWDEN (Shane/90, Lauren/94) 8800 Starcrest Dr Apt #319, San Antonio 78217

VT — Joy & Jon BRILLHART (Victoria/90, Jacob/93) RR 2 Box 76B, W Topsham 05086 (change) •• Debbie GAWOR (Maia/94) RR1 Box 5380, Jericho 05465 •• Reed & Chris SIMS (Emily/87, Paul/89) RD 2 Box 34, Jericho 05465 **(H)** •• Karen & Edward FOX (Morgan/87, Cassidy/90) 106 East St, Barre 05641 **(H)** •• John & Kate BILINSKI (Cara/77, Maria/87) RR 1 Box 163A, Rochester 05767 **(H)** •• Jane DWINELL & Sky YARDLEY (Dana/87, Sayer/90) RD 1 Box 37A, Irasburg 05845 (change) **(H)**

WA — Ahava & Harold BLASZKA (Gavriella/85, Avi/88, David/90) 6009 Seward Pk Av S, Seattle 98118 •• David & Robin STANGLAND (Amanda/91, Audrey/94) 2210 Baker Av, Everett 98201 •• Lisa & Chris CONYERS (Hallie/91, Kyle/92) 2221 N Trumpeter Dr, Mt Vernon 98273 •• Robert & JoAnn RICHARDSON (David/90, Maria/93) 4166 NW Hofman Circle, Silverdale 98383 •• Suzanne NOBLE & Ande STRITMATTER (Amy/86, Stevie/92) 12381 Vantage Hwy, Ellensburg 98926 **(H)**

Canada:

BC — Stephanie JUDY & David STEWART (Tessa/82) 2 Press Rd, Argenta V0G 1B0 (change) •• Lyn TURNER & James KLYMIUK (Zoe/90, Molly/93) 1464 Richter St, Kelowna V1Y 2L8 •• Brigitte ELMER & Marco HAESSIG (Yvon/91, Nikolai/92) PO Box 223, Horsefly V0L 1L0 **(H)**

PQ — Christine DOWAL & Raynald ASSELIN (Samuel/92, Lara/94) 854 St Charles Av, Chomedey-Laval H7V 2Y8

Other Locations — Timothy & Junko RUSSELL (Ryo/86, Shin/90) USA Meddac - Japan Box 65, APO AP 96338-5011 (**Japan**) (change) **(H)** •• Valerie & Richard MOON (Brian/70, Andy & Cindy/80, Rosie/82) HQs Usareur CMR 420, Box 606, APO AE 09063 (**Germany**) (change) **(H)** •• Didier & Marie-Christine COLLUMEAU (Jean-Francois/85, Nathieu/88) L'Archinee 18270 Culan, Reigny, **France (H)** •• John & Theresa MURPHY (Fiacc/82, Ciodhna/88) Clahane Ballyard, Tralee Co. Kerry, **Ireland** •• Litsong LU & U-Ser JENG (Wen/93) 8F #68 San-Chung 1st Rd, Chu-Dung Hsin-Chu **Taiwan** (change) **(H)**

Groups to add to the Directory of Organizations that was published in GWS #114:

CO: West River Unschoolers, 2420 N 1 St, Grand Junction 81501, 970-241-4137

MT: Independent Homeschoolers Network of Bozeman, 415 S 9 Av, Bozeman 59715, 406-586-4564

Ireland: Sa Bhaile (At Home), Clahane, Ballyard, Tralee, Co. Kerry, 066-26901

Groups to delete:

CA: W. San Fernando Valley Playgroup

OH: Assoc. of Ohio Homeschoolers

Special-Interest Groups: Home Educators Computer Users Group

Address/Phone Changes:

AK: Alaska HomeSpun Educators (formerly Anchorage HomeSpun Educators), PO Box 798, Girdwood 99587, email 102155.700@compuserve.com

CA: Los Angeles Homeschoolers, 20815 Big Rock Dr, Malibu 90265, 310-456-5447

GA: Atlanta Alternative Education Network, c/o Sheffield, 1672 Cody Cir, Tucker 30084, 404-636-6348

MA: Homeschooling Together, 617-641-0566

NC: Families Learning Together, 1670 NC 33 West, Chocowinity 27817, email cn2464@abaco.coastalnet.com

OH: Home Education League of Parents (Central Ohio), PO Box 14296, Columbus 43214, 614-470-2219

OK: Home Educator's Resource Organization, 4401 Quail Run Av, Skiatook 74070-4024, 918-396-0108

SC: Teacher's Ink (formerly Homeschool Assoc of SC), PO Box 13386, Charleston 29422, 803-795-9982, email pfmsuper@worldnet.att.net

WA: Teaching Parents Assoc, PO Box 1934, Woodinville 98072-1934

New Zealand: Home Educator's Network of Aotearoa, PO Box 11-645, Ellerslie 1131, Auckland

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ENTRY FORM FOR DIRECTORY

Use this form to send us a new entry or a substantial address change to be run in the next available issue of GWS.
Adults (first *and* last names):

Organization (only if address is same as family):

Children (names/birthyears):

Full address (Street, City, State, Zip):

Are you willing to host traveling GWS readers who make advance arrangements in writing? Yes ___ No ___

Are you in the 1997 Directory (GWS #114)? Yes ___ No ___
Or in the additions in a subsequent issue? Yes ___ No ___

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Pen-Pals

Children wanting pen-pals should write to those listed. Pleae try to write to someone on the list before listing yourself, and remember to put your address on your letter. To be listed, send name, age, address, and 1-3 words on interests. ••• BRICKLIN, 162 Wilson St, San Francisco CA 94112: Jeanita (8) dance, Babysitters Club, New York City; Christopher (5) arts, Karate, Power Rangers ••• HENSON, PO Box 104, Spiro OK 74959: Rachel (15) dancing, shopping, writing; Joshua (13) rollerblading, sports, camping; Bethany (6) rollerskating, gymnastics, reading ••• Nick WHETZEL (12) 6514 Dolphin Ct, Glen Burnie MD 21061: sports, music, swimming ••• Michelle KNIFFIN (9) 179 Spruce Knob Rd, Middletown Springs VT 05757: animals, reading ••• MORATA, 6201 Hesketh Dr, Bakersfield CA 93309: Lillian (8) camping, insects, piano; Elizabeth (10) reading, Native American History, Tae Kwon Do; Anna Lee (11) coin & stamp collecting, Tae Kwon Do, camping ••• Crystal BARRY-REC (10) Rt. 3 Box 226-A, Lexington VA 29450: horses, reading, writing ••• STOECKLEIN, 5620 Randal Ln, Racine WI 53402: Danny (9) baseball, guitar, sculpture; Annie (11) reading, dancing, art; Jerry (13) Star Trek, sports, models ••• Samuel BRINGHURST (12) 736 Boxwood Rd, Woodland CA 95695: computers, sports, reading ••• GESSLER, 9418 Rocky Run Rd, Harshaw WI 54529: Candice (8) horses, reading, animals; Amanda (10) piano, art, reading; Gary (12) horses, outdoors, carpentry

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Parenting Counselor - see display p. 23

GWS 20th Anniversary Conference
Subscribers' Early Registration

When: Fri. night, August 8, 7-10pm."Meet the Authors" Reception and vendors. Saturday, Aug. 9: Keynote at 9am, workshops until 5pm, vendors 8am-6pm. Sunday, Aug. 10: Keynote at 9am, banquet ends at 3pm. Vendors 8-1pm. Optional tours on Friday and Monday. Conference room rate available 2 days before & after conf.

Where: Westin Hotel in Waltham/Boston. A 4-Star Hotel off Exit 27A on I-95 (also called Rt.128). Special Room Rate of $85 for 2 double beds or 1 king size. Call (617) 290-5600, ask for "GWS 20th Anniv. Conf."

Keynote Speakers: David and Micki Colfax "Homeschooling, Children and the World of Real Work"
John Taylor Gatto "What I Actually Did with the Kids in My Classes."

Panels: Grown-Up Homeschoolers (all 20 now!), Mae Shell, Amanda Bergson-Shilcock and more!
Veteran Parents (the pioneers!) Susan & Larry Kaseman (authors "Taking charge Through Homeschooling"), Mark & Helen Hegener (Home Ed. Mag.,WA), Manfred Smith (Maryland Home Ed.), Nancy Plent (Unschoolers Netwrk, NJ), Katharine Houk and Seth Rockmuller (ALLPIE, NY)

Lectures/Workshops: A sampling of lectures and workshops is printed on the back cover; plus more coming!!

Discussions: "Separating Parenting Issues from Unschooling Issues," led by Susan Kaseman
"Opting In and Out of School," led by Loretta Heuer
"Dealing with Criticism," led by Maggie Sadoway AND MORE COMING. HAVE YOUR OWN!

Children's Program: As the pool is tiny and playground far, we are offering awesome workshops for children instead. (Very Bostonian, too.) See details on back cover. We also will have a Horse Course by Boston Park Rangers, storytelling performance from Greathall Productions, recycleable materials for imaginative crafts and board games. We need some kids to bring a science or history project to display at Sunday's Fair. Tables available. NO CARPET MESSING STUFF.
NOTE ON CHILDREN: We are expecting a 3:1 ratio of parents to children. Many of you may enjoy this important weekend with adults, wonderful uninterrupted conversations, hot tub and nice dinner without your children.

Optional Tours: Friday - Concord/Lexington or Walden Pond or exclusive Leonardo DaVinci exhibit at Mus. of Science.
Monday --Whale Watch/Aquarium or Plimoth Plantation. Brochure with your Registration Confirmation.

Copy or Cut out this Subscriber's Registration Form and mail with full payment. You will be sent complete conference information, including schedule, child waiver form and optional tours brochure.

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# Teens	_____	x $ 95 =	_____
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# Children(3-6)	_____	x $ 65 =	_____
# Babysitting hrs.	_____	x $ 4 =	_____

(exact hours wanted _____)

Total (include payment) = _____

Celebration

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20th Anniversary Conference

August 8, 9, 10 1997

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- The Guerrilla Curriculum, John Taylor Gatto
- Myths of Unschooling: What Freedom Really Means, Susannah Sheffer
- John Holt's Life and Work, Patrick Farenga
- The Roots of Homeschooling: Ivan Illich's influence on John Holt, Aaron Falbel
- 12-Step Recovery Program for School Addiction, Donna Nichols-White
- Finding a Mentor: Our Journey, Amanda Bergson-Shilcock & Susannah Sheffer
- How the Homeschooling Movement has Changed Society, Nancy Plent
- From Homeschooling to Work They Like Doing, Larry Kaseman
- Creative Ways to Learn History & Social Studies, Phoebe Wells
- College Admissions Demystified for Homeschoolers, Cafi Cohen
- Dealing With the Media, Linda Dobson (especially for local support leaders)
- Science Options for the Teenage Homeschooler, Madalene Murphy

Full Weekend Prices:

Adult: includes 2 keynotes, 2 panels, 3 lectures/workshops (choose from 27!), 1 Sat. evening discussion (choose from over 7), Friday night reception, Sat. Lunch (salad buffet), Sunday banquet, and access to 21 of our favorite vendors. **$165**

Teen (13-19): includes the keynote and panels, exclusive discussion with Grown-Up Homeschoolers Panelists, teen room, lectures and workshops of special interest, reception, lunch and banquet. **$95**

Children (6-12): includes workshop choices from NE Aquarium, Mus. of Science, Audubon Soc., magazines, the Internet, orienteering, Living History perf. and Fri. reception, Sat. lunch, Sunday banquet. **$65**

Children (3-6): includes appropriate classes from above museums, plus supervised crafts, stories & playing, reception, lunch & banquet. **$65**

3 and under: meals free, parents can take to nearby playground, animals and woods. On-site babysitting, pre-register specific times. **$4/hr.**

GWS Subscriber Special—Registration Form Inside!

GWS subscribers will not be sent a separate mailing. You may call/write for a detailed registration packet if you want more information or cannot come for the full weekend and need to choose a day.

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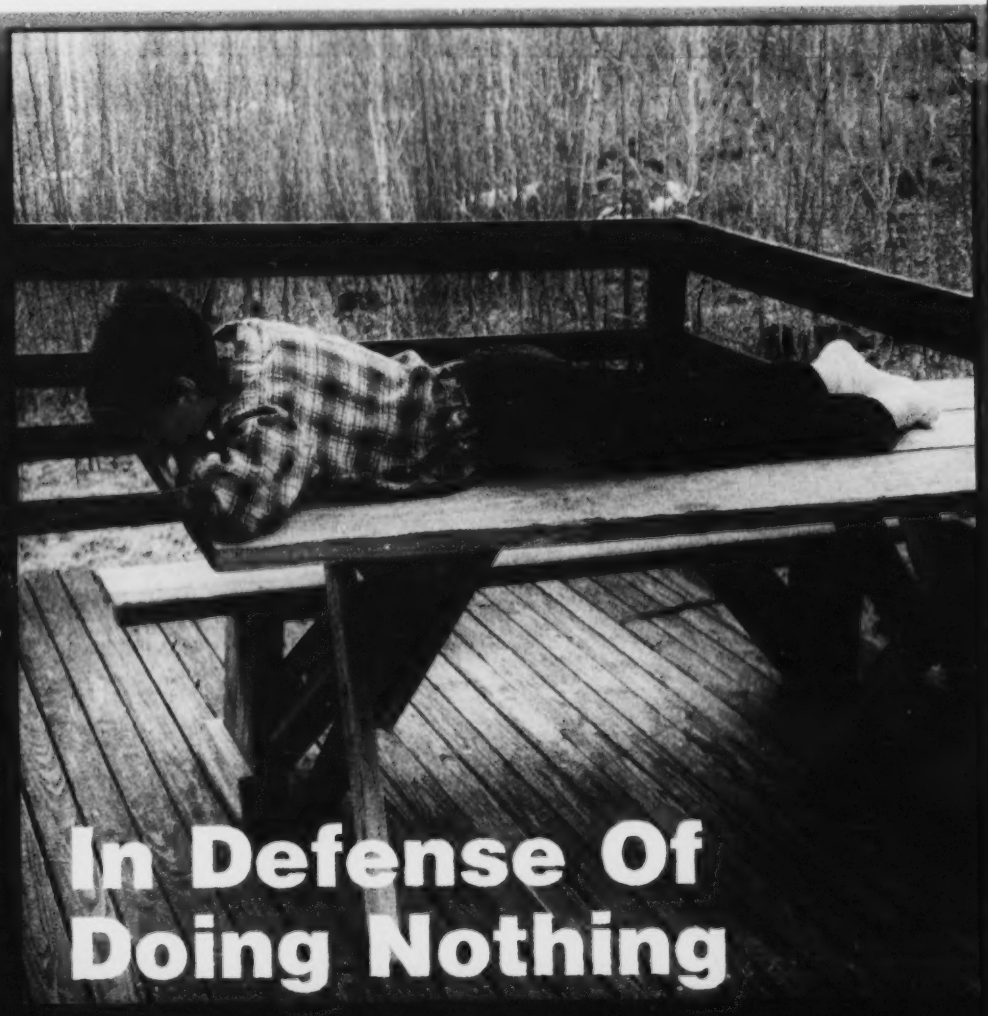
GROWING WITHOUT SCHOOLING

ALSO INSIDE: UNLEARNING SCHOOL'S LESSONS

U.S. $6 Issue 117 July/Aug. 1997

How Parents Relearn History, Math, and More

Young People as Local Activists



In Defense Of Doing Nothing

114

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Issue #117
July/August '97

GWS

Founded in 1977
By John Holt

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Cover photo is of Nathan Post. See Focus, p. 16.

Growing Without Schooling #117, Vol. 20, No. 2, ISSN #0475-5505. Published by Holt Associates, 2269 Mass. Ave., Cambridge MA 02140; phone 617-864-3100, fax 617-864-9235, email HoltGWS@aol.com, Web www.HoltGWS.com. $25/yr. Date of issue: June 1, 1997. Second-class postage paid at Boston, MA and at additional mailing offices.
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to GWS, 2269 Mass. Ave, Cambridge, MA 02140
ADVERTISERS: Space reservation deadlines are the 1st of odd-numbered months. Copy deadlines are the 15th. Write for rates.

In this issue

Look at a tree, and try to draw the spaces between the leaves. Think about how the spaces, the areas of "not leaf," actually give shape to the leaves and help you to see them.

Look at a young person sprawled across a bed staring at the ceiling or riding in back seat of the car staring out the window. Think about how those moments of doing nothing, the hours of "not busy," actually give shape and focus to the young person's many activities.

Few things seem to make homeschooling parents more anxious than the sight of a homeschooler lying around the house doing nothing. In fact, sometimes kids make *themselves* nervous when they spend a whole day like this. But when asked to reflect on those times of doing nothing, they quickly realize how valuable such times are. "Nothing" time creates a space, a period of quietness, in which ideas form, thoughts settle into order, and internal batteries get recharged. Doing nothing and doing something aren't opposing forces, but complementary, even mutually necessary.

Appearances can be deceiving, and perhaps never more than when it comes to this matter of doing nothing. That young person lying around the house isn't, in fact, doing nothing, as the writers in this issue's Focus take care to point out. *Doing nothing immediately visible* might be a better description. In other words, *thinking*. How strange that in a family's, or society's, list of what young people are supposed to be doing, this crucial item so often gets overlooked. Maybe it gets overlooked because it almost seems too obvious to mention, or maybe it gets overlooked because it's invisible. But since it's the source of so much that young people do that does get celebrated, it deserves its own few pages of exploration.

In the book *Real Lives*, Patrick Meehan wrote, "[It] bugged my mother that I'd sometimes sit around and look off into space for what seemed hours on end. She would accuse me of wasting time. But I was not wasting time. ... Whether in art or math or philosophy, important thoughts do not pop, fully formed, into one's mind. One must develop them bit by bit." And, echoing Patrick, in this issue of GWS we have Andy visualizing a drawing in his mind; Lydia working out her ideas about herself and reevaluating how she has handled past situations; Emily reviewing Spanish sentences; Nathan seeing and building, in his mind, something he wants to build with his hands in the future – and others, all of whom would have looked like they were only lying around, had we not asked what they were really doing.

"I think doing nothing is an extremely important part of growing up," John Holt said in 1983, and this is probably even truer today, with young people's lives so crowded and busy and so few moments truly their own. When I read the words of the young people in this issue, I think of how wonderful it is that so much of their time *is* theirs, so that they can think and reflect and plan and dream without having to feel inordinately guilty about what else they should be doing. — Susannah Sheffer

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Results of Nationwide Homeschool Study

Brian Ray, President of the National Home Education Research Institute, writes:

Recently, the National Home Education Research Institute and I were able to complete a nationwide study of homeschooling. The purpose of this study was to examine the academic achievement and social activities of home-educated students and the basic demographics of their families, to assess the relationships between student achievement and selected student and family variables, and to describe and explore certain longitudinal changes among home-educated students and their families. I'll summarize the study here; the full-length report is available as a book titled *Strengths of Their Own – Home Schoolers Across America.*

The target population was all homeschooling families in the United States. Data were collected on 1,657 families and their 5,402 children. 275 of the families had participated in my 1990 nationwide study, which only included families from the Home School Legal Defense Association's membership. In this present study, our goal was to include a more representative sample of homeschoolers across America. Many organizations and individuals cooperated with us in this effort. HSLDA largely sponsored the study.

Here is a brief look at the demographics of the families. With 3.3 children and 98% being headed by married couples, they were much larger than the U.S. average. Ninety-five percent of family income was earned by the fathers; 34% of them were professionals and 11% were small business owners. Eighty-eight percent of the mothers were homemakers/home educators and only 16% of the mothers worked outside the home. A wide variety of religious affiliations was evident among the parents. Atheists, Buddhists, Jews, Mormons, Muslims, New Agers, and others participated, while about 90% identified themselves as Christians.

The parents had higher than average educational attainment; 46% of the fathers had a bachelor's degree or higher, and 42% of the mothers had the same. These families' median annual income of $43,000 was a little lower than the median for all married-couple families in the United States. The parents spent, on average, $546 per child per year for home education.

The mother did 88% of the "formal" teaching of the children while the father did 10% of the teaching. The large majority of these children were not being taught by professionally trained and government-certified teachers.

On average, the children had been taught at home for 5 years since age 5, 85% were in grades K through 8, and the vast majority of their parents planned to homeschool them through their secondary school years. Parents handpicked curriculum materials – rather than purchasing complete programs – for 71% of the students. The social activities of these children were quite varied; for example, 47% were involved in music classes, 48% were involved in group sports, and 77% participated in Sunday school.

These students scored, on the average, at high percentiles on standardized academic achievement tests – over 80% in reading, language, math, listening, science, social studies, and study skills. (The national average is the 50th percentile.)

Several analyses were conducted to determine which independent variables were significantly related to academic achievement. There was *no* significant relationship between achievement and (a) whether the father was a certified teacher, (b) whether the mother was a certified teacher, (c) family income, (d) money spent on education, (e) legal status of the family, (f) time spent on formal instruction, (g) age formal instruction began, and (h) degree of state regulation of homeschooling.

Achievement was statistically significantly related, in some cases, to father's education level, mother's education level, gender of student, years home educated, use of libraries, who administered the test, and use of computers. The relationships were, however, weak and not practically significant.

This and other studies indicate that very few background variables (e.g. socioeconomic status of parents, regulation by state) explain the academic achievement of the home-educated. It is possible that the home education environment ameliorates the effect of variables that are typically considered a detriment to students. A variety of students in a variety of home education settings have performed very well in terms of academic achievement. I surmise at length, in the book-length report on the study, why the home-educated are doing so well.

I recognize that there are many criteria for determining success in education (e.g. personal character traits, behavior towards others, personal beliefs, critical thinking skills, and knowledge). Further, I recognize that standardized academic achievement tests measure only one aspect of education. But regardless of one's opinion about the validity and value of these tests and their accompanying scores, they provide information about the success of groups of (and sometimes individual) students that is widely used in the educational, political, legal, and media worlds.

Dr. Ray's book *Strengths of Their Own* is available for $19.95 + $2 shipping, and his newsletter, the *Home School Researcher*, is available for $25 a year (4 issues), from NHERI, PO Box 13939, Salem OR 97309; phone 503-364-1490, fax 503-364-2827, Web: www.nheri.org, email mail@nheri.org.

Defeating Homeschool Eligibility Bill in Wisconsin

About 400 homeschoolers attended a hearing on April 9th about Senate Bill 106, a bill that would have fundamentally changed Wisconsin's homeschooling law, according to a mailing from the Wisconsin Parents Assocation. Homeschoolers succeeded in persuading legislators not to vote for this bill.

Under Wisconsin's current law, which has been in effect since 1984, parents submit a form to the Department of Public Instruction attesting that they are in compliance with the homeschool law – i.e., providing a sequentially progressive curriculum and 875 hours of instruction a year. SB 106 would have amended this law by saying that families can homeschool *unless* the child has been found to be in need of protective services or has violated the truancy ordinance.

In late March, WPA sent out a mailing to homeschoolers around the state giving the text of SB 106 and explaining its opposition to the bill. In particular, WPA argued that legislation that attempts to keep truants from turning to homeschooling actually reduces the freedom of all homeschoolers: "... we face much more serious threats from the state gaining the authority to determine who is eligible to homeschool than we do from the possibility of a few families whose children have been truant not doing a good job of homeschooling. ... Some of us may have wondered if we were 'homeschooling material' before we started homeschooling. There is really no way to determine, before families start homeschooling, which families it will work for. Some of the people who need the benefits of homeschooling the most may appear the least likely candidates before they begin." Thus, rather than trying to solve the problem of truancy by preventing truants from becoming legal homeschoolers, WPA argued that "it is better to use existing laws that provide for schools to offer truants alternative programs and contracts with nonsectarian private schools. In addition, homeschooling often works for young people who have had difficulty learning in a conventional setting."

A mailing from WPA after the April 9th hearing reports that homeschoolers succeeded in persuading legislators not to vote in favor of the bill, which means that it will very likely die in committee. WPA writes, "During the hearing ... members of the Senate Education Committee indicated that they recognize that homeschooling works. ... Contacts we made with legislators before the hearing (our phone calls, letters, and face-to-face conversations) did a lot to inform legislators and convince them not to support SB 106. ... Sixty people registered to testify against SB 106, although time delays meant that only 28 actually spoke ... The testimony was clear, strong, and impressive."

Good and Bad Bills in WV

West Virginia homeschooling parent Barbara Walker wrote us in late March to say that a bill had been introduced into the state legislature that would require all homeschooling parents to have two years of college and passing scores on the National Teacher's Exam in all subjects to be taught. (Under current WV law, homeschooling parents are required to have four years of schooling beyond the oldest student they're teaching and to have each student assessed each year using a standardized test or a portfolio).

A few weeks later, Barbara told us that the bill never got out of committee before the end of the legislative session. She also told us that another bill, which would have allowed homeschoolers to participate in school's extracurricular activities, including sports, did not get out of committee either, despite a lot of support at a public hearing and support from some key legislators. Barbara said that opposition from the Secondary Schools Activities Commission and others may have put pressure on the Committee Chair not to introduce the bill.

Tests Don't Motivate Students

From the Winter 1996-97 issue of the FairTest Examiner, the newsletter of the National Center for Fair and Open Testing:

A major argument by proponents of high-stakes exams is that such exams will motivate students to try harder and achieve more. This argument has been made by President Clinton, many business leaders, [the late] Al Shanker of the American Federation of Teachers, and some other educators.

In *The Uses of External Examinations to Improve Student Motivation*, T. Kellaghan, G.F. Madaus, and A. Raczek conclude that the available evidence does not support the claim that high-stakes testing will induce improved learning. This Public Service Monograph of the American Educational Research Association reviews research on motivation theory, use of motivation in test-driven education reform and in industry, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, and use of the latter to improve student learning. The summary strongly states the authors'

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conclusions:

"... First, current proposals do not address the complexity of the motivation process and how a system of external examinations might have an impact on it ... Second, those who are not motivated are likely to become alienated from the educational process. Third, for those who are motivated, the consequences for the quality of their learning may be very different from those anticipated in the reform proposals. We can expect high-stakes external examinations to narrow the curricular experiences of students and to encourage them to concentrate on achieving high levels of test peformance at the expense of striving for high levels of mastery. If this happens, the proposed system(s) will not move the American educational system toward the objective of producing a student population with higher levels of achievement, greater self-determination and creativity, and improved higher-order thinking skills and problem-solving abilities."

In short, use of high-stakes exams could backfire against the professed goals of many education reformers, if the analysis of motivation is correct. While the monograph was written in response to proposals for national exams, the content is equally relevant to state or district high-stakes testing programs, and provides valuable evidence as to why implementation of high-stakes tests should be opposed. ...

The monograph is available for $11 from AERA, 1230 17th St NW, Washington DC 20036.

Office News

[SS:] Our apologies to those of you who have observed that the production quality and mailing schedule of recent issues of GWS hasn't been up to our usual standard. Issues have been mailed later than usual, and some subscribers have reported problems with a few pages in GWS #115 and #116. We had been using a printer who turned out to be unable to handle our job as smoothly as we and they had originally hoped. With this issue, we have switched to a new printer and we expect things to improve significantly.

On April 8th, I visited the Pathfinder Learning Center in Amherst, Mass., a resource center for homeschooling teenagers which its founders, two former schoolteachers, described in GWS #114. Before the public event that evening, I was able to spend a few hours talking to some of the teenagers, sitting in on a writing class, and generally getting a sense of the place. Of the 55 teenagers who are currently members, many are quite new to homeschooling, and the center – both as a physical place to go and as a source of support and ideas – seems to help make homeschooling feel possible for a number of families who wouldn't otherwise have undertaken it.

What excited me most was observing the degree to which the center has managed *not* to take on any of the characteristics or functions of a school, and I mention this because I know it's something that people creating resource centers often struggle with. Pathfinder steadfastedly refuses to take on the custodial function of schooling – in other words, the young people truly can come and go. Some spend

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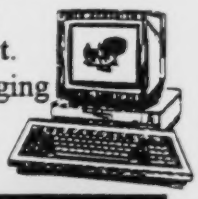

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only a couple of hours a week there; others come by much more frequently, but there's no sense that time spent there is more valuable than time spent elsewhere. On the contrary, the place is clearly a resource center, a place from which you branch out into all sorts of other activities at home and in the community. Second, the founders also scrupulously avoid being responsible for the academic lives of the young people. For example, they have many math books available, they will recommend some and talk about math options and give all sorts of other help if asked, but, as Ken Danford said to one parent while I was there, "Your child is welcome to come here and do math, but if he leaves that day and hasn't done the math you expected him to do, that's between you and him, not between you and us." In other words, it's not the center's business to try to make sure that the kids learn any particular thing or get any particular academic work accomplished. This, too, frees them to be a center rather than a school, and as I sat and observed I found myself thinking about John Holt's discussion of this distinction in *Teach Your Own* years ago. Just as it's continually interesting for individual families to sort out how to learn and do things together without replicating school in their homes, so is it interesting and challenging for groups – and no doubt there will be more such groups and centers and clubs as time goes on – to figure out how to be a gathering place and a resource center without also acting like a school.

Getting calls from newspaper, radio, and television reporters around the country is common in our office. It was an interesting novelty, however, to receive a visit from a Chinese radio journalist earlier this month. Zhou Ping of the Central People's Broadcasting Station was visiting Boston with his English language interpreter, Minnesota homeschooling father Karl Bunday, and the two stopped by Holt Associates to ask some questions about homeschooling in the U.S. They told us that the story would be broadcast on a station that reaches the entire country – that's a lot of people who will probably be hearing about homeschooling for the first time!

[PF:] For quite some time, when we were asked, "When will you have a web site?", we would answer, "We don't have the time or the money to do it." But when homeschooling parent Dorothy Giansiracusa got that response, she wasn't deterred. "I can spare some time and you don't have to pay me to do it; I consider it a learning experience," she said. Dorothy has recently completed her work on the site, whose address is www.holtgws.com.

On the site, Dorothy has placed our questions and answers about homeschooling from our catalog, catalog listings, conference information, upcoming speaking engagements, links to selected learning resources, and information about subscribing to GWS. We are expanding this content to include some GWS material arranged by theme (Late Readers, Teen Homeschoolers, etc.), the table of contents from current GWS issues, a Reading List of books we recommend but don't sell, and a feature called "20 [or 10, 5, etc.] Years Ago in GWS" that will select a story or two from our back issues. In the future, we may also have message boards available. If you have other ideas for this site, write to me or to Ginger Fitzsimmons; Ginger will be maintaining the site on a day-to-day basis.

In addition to telling you what the web site will offer, we want to be clear about what we will *not* use it to do. First, we will post information about and stories from GWS in a limited fashion, as a way to generate interest and subscriptions, but we will not offer over the web anything we don't offer our paid subscribers through the magazine itself. For example, we won't

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publish material on the site before it's published in the magazine. We were faced with such a decision recently; as soon as we announced our 20th anniversary conference, some folks requested that we put conference information up online before it was printed in the magazine, but we chose to wait until the issues containing that information were mailed to subscribers before we posted the information online.

Second, we won't use the internet as a substitute for other forms of political action. In our view, sending email about an issue is not the same as appearing at a hearing, speaking to a legislative aide, or actually reading the bill in question. Sending information to hundreds of people at once via the internet is not the same as holding a meeting in one's house or in the community. So we won't substitute email for these other forms of action when they too seem necessary.

Third, we will link our web site only to sites that we have checked out ourselves and that we feel we can truly recommend.

Finally, a word about how we do and don't use email. Since we're a small office with, essentially, only one person regularly checking email and then distributing the messages to the appropriate staff, email is not (even though it might seem to be) the quickest way to each us. U.S. mail, faxes, and phone messages get to the designated staff member right away, but it takes us longer to process our email, so we ask for your understanding: please don't use email if you need to reach us immediately, especially if you need to reach a particular staff member. On the other hand, Email works fine for information requests, directory updates, questions for which you don't need an immediate response, information you just want to pass along, and so on. Our email addresses are HoltGWS@ aol.com and HoltGWS@erols.com.

Calendar

June 21-22: The Link (Kid-Comfortable) Conference in **West Lake, CA**. Pat and Dav Farenga doing workshops; books available for sale. Also John Gatto, the Colfaxes. For info: Mary Leppert, 805-492-1373.

June 21: Utah Home Education Assoc Convention & Curriculum Fair at Brigham Young U, **Provo, UT**. For info: Michelle Smith, 801-774-0495.

June 28: Unschoolers' Network conference at Brookdale Community College in **Lincroft, NJ**. Pat Farenga speaking; books available for sale. For info: Nancy Plent, 908-938-2473.

Aug. 8-10: Growing Without Schooling's 20th Anniversary conference at the Westin Hotel in Waltham (near **Boston**), MA. David & Micki Colfax, John Gatto, workshops by veteran homeschoolers. For info: GWS, 617-864-3100.

Aug. 23-25: Home Education Resource Organization conference in **Columbus, OH**. Pat Farenga speaking; books available for sale. For info: Chris O'Connor, 614-852-7926.

Sept. 6: WV Home Educators Assoc conference at Jackson's Mill Conference Center in **Weston, WV**. Theme: Play=Work. For info: 1-800-736-9843.

Deadline for GWS #118 Calendar listings is 7/10. For GWS #119, 9/10. ◆

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How Parents Relearn Math, History, and more

Are kids the only ones who learn when a family homeschools? Not at all. For many parents, helping their children learn is the impetus that lets them discover, or rediscover, an interest or ability of their own. In the following stories, parents describe this process.

Overcoming Math Anxiety as She Helps Her Daughter

From Lyn Milum (FL):

Mrs. Powell looked at me through wire-rimmed glasses, and I could feel her subdued anger. The whole fourth grade class was quiet, watching. No, I hadn't studied my multiplication tables while I was home with scarlet fever for six weeks. Mrs. Powell's solution was to put my desk in the hall until I did learn them. I sat in the hall and cried. The hall was where bad kids sat for disrupting the class. I couldn't bear being thought of as a bad kid, but I couldn't explain my being there to everyone passing by.

I don't remember any math anxiety before that point, but after fourth grade I was uncomfortable with any form of math. After college I thought I'd never have to work with numbers, beyond balancing my checkbook and filling out a tax return. This proved to be true, until I began to homeschool my daughter in 1989. She was in fourth grade when she left public school.

When Arwen asked me to help her learn to use mathematics, I just went step by step with the book so I could understand it enough to help her. We played a lot of games that involved mathematical thinking. After a couple of years, I realized that I really did understand the process. I began to enjoy the patterns and the flow of problems. I have become quite enthusiastic about math now and enjoy learning with my kids.

My son Michael is a natural at mathematical thinking. He learned to read a clock and a calendar, use money, a stopwatch, and measuring equipment, because his interests required these tools. He learned a lot of number facts from games – Yahtzee, card games, and Monopoly. This week I bought some blank dice, marked them 7 through 12, and created "Mega-Yahtzee." He likes the greater challenge of different numbers and the higher score possibilities. Last month he asked me, "Did you know that any number plus itself can be divided by 2?" I love to witness his 8-year-old mind as he entertains himself with these deep thoughts.

Recently Arwen and I were working out a ratio and percent problem. Arwen knew the answer, but couldn't figure out how she got there. We analyzed it and tore it apart until we came up with a formula that made sense and could be proven with other problems we made up. Later that night my husband and I stayed up late trying to figure out an easier way to do the problem. It was fascinating to finally arrive at a simple solution, because the complicated approach Arwen and I came up with was the "inner workings" of the simple one.

I'm not so interested that I work math problems in all of my spare time, but it is wonderful to have conquered that old mental block. Needing to help my child learn enabled me to finally break through and open my mind to understand and enjoy math.

Learning History in a Relaxed Context

From Andy Migner (MA):

In spite of the fact that I had several inspired history teachers in junior and senior high school, I never "got it." History was a tangle of unconnected and meaningless dates, facts, places, and events, and I had no sense of how it all fit together. Everything seemed to have happened in some elusive time (called history) that was both ancient and simultaneous.

In the last few years, however, history has begun to come alive for me. People, events, and time periods that vaguely rang a bell somewhere in the cobwebs of my brain have become fleshed out – colorful, three-dimensional, and, most important, personally meaningful. How has this happened?

At first I thought it was the result of our particular approach to learning history as a homeschooling family. Exploring history through reading biographies and historical fiction, followed by movies and field trips covering the same time period, has been an effective way for me, as a "people person," to take in information. I need to know about the individual lives, how they were molded or affected by their times, what motivated their point of view and actions, how their relationships were affected. I find myself having much more compassion for some of the attitudes people held or decisions that were made that run contrary to what I believe is right, because I am viewing the people in their context rather than judging them from my own. And I am also beginning to have a sense of continuity, not because I have charted a timeline but because there are now people in my heart and mind who lived in different eras, and I have walked in their shoes.

I thought that this approach alone

was responsible for my newfound enjoyment and valuing of history until I rememberd that one of my inspired history teachers in junior high school had read us the story of Johnny Tremain. This and subsequent books we have read as a family brought the revolutionary war and the events leading up to it alive for both me and my family. But it had no such effect when I read it in school.

This got me thinking about the importance of my own context. When I read aloud to my children, watch a movie, or walk along the Boston Harbor, I am relaxed and enjoying myself. There is no low-level panic that comes from knowing I'm going to have to remember and regurgitate some of this information on a test, in a paper, or in a class discussion. No one is grading me.

I think it is the mode of learning rather than the method that has most affected my ability to "get" history now. I have read that you only remember experiences that you are fully present for. Is that why my school years are a bit of a blur? Perhaps. I've always been impressed by my children's ability to retain everything they have learned. Their memories are awesome. At their age, I learned to cram for tests and then forget it all; it was as if someone had erased the file from my computer. But now I am gaining the same pleasure of learning and retention that my children enjoy. Like a 10-year-old boy I know who had difficulty remembering what he learned in school, I too can now say, "It's funny how I remember everything I learn at home."

Learns to Enjoy Reading

From Cheryle Duncan (MO):

Ever since I can remember, I avoided reading at all costs – until I started reading books to my kids when they were babies. Unintimidated, I enjoyed the simple books with their beautiful illustrations. The kids grew, as did their interests, and so through the years I advanced with them through picture books, easy readers, and on to longer and more complex books. At some point I started to enjoy reading books myself, not just to the kids. I mostly read books about parenting, how-to-homeschool books, and other nonfiction that I thought would really make a difference in my life. Then I decided to join a small local literary group that reads novels and discusses them. I wanted to try it because it was something I had never done. It's still hard for me, sometimes, because sometimes I say to myself, "Are these books as valuable as nonfiction?" But I look forward to the meetings each month, and I really like being in on the discussions and hearing what the other people have to say.

Ever since I can remember, I avoided reading at all costs – until I started reading books to my kids when they were babies. And at some point I started to enjoy reading books myself.

They help me see that there's more to novels than I thought at first. It's neat to be part of this group, because reading was never a pleasure for me when I was growing up; it was just school stuff that you had to do. And when I look back, I realize how important it was for me to be able to start over, in a way, by reading picture books to my children. That gave me a chance to enjoy reading and to start way back at the beginning, and I think that if I hadn't had that opportunity, I would probably have remained a nonreader all my life.

Like nearly all the other required school subjects, I also hated and was completely perplexed by grammar. Because of that, I didn't push grammar on my kids. I let them decide when they were ready for it, so they had a relaxed attitude about it. When I was looking for a book to use, I came across *Easy Grammar*. I decided to give grammar another try and have been doing it along with the kids and actually feel excited about it.

Another example is that our family has always had an interest in Germany and a desire to go there one day, so we decided to study it several years ago. My son Tyler decided he'd

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like to learn the German language, so I found some books, tapes, etc. My daughter Cally got interested in German before long, and then my husband and I started to dally in it too. Now we all study German daily, each of us using different materials and at our own pace. My children are learning it much faster than I am, but I'm learning it nonetheless. I never thought I'd be studying a language after my futile experiences with Spanish during high school.

With all the studying of other countries that we've done, Tyler and Cally decided to get foreign pen-pals. They each got two from Germany as well as two from other countries. I enjoyed their letters so much and over time I decided I'd like to have an adult pen-pal from Germany myself. The pen-pal companies I found didn't offer adult pen-pals, so I wrote to my kids' pen-pals asking them to give my letter to an adult they thought would be interested. Now I have a German pen-pal of my own.

Sometimes my kids' interest in and enthusiasm for a subject means that I can't help learning about that subject too, even if I hadn't been interested before. Tyler, for example, has had nearly an obsession with fossils since he was very small. Although I'd probably have never learned anything about fossils on my own, I now know quite a bit about them. And because of Cally's strong attraction to horses, we have gotten a pony for her, and I have learned all kinds of things about horses and their care. Really, there are very few subjects I *haven't* grown to love learning about because of learning with and from my kids.

Discovers Enthusiasm for Geology

From Ken Lipman-Stern (NJ):

A few years ago, when we were just getting into homeschooling, we visited a geology museum associated with a local university. My son was interested in the fossils, and although I had up to then minimal experience with geology or paleontology, I had once found some fossils at summer camp and always found them interesting. I asked the curator of the museum if there were any fossil sites nearby that we could explore on our own. He gave us directions to a small stream, next to a rural road about 40 minutes away.

I took a few homeschoolers and that first time we found some 75-million-year-old sharks' teeth. The kids and I were fascinated. The next time we went, there were a couple of cars parked near the stream, and we got into a conversation with the folks coming back to the cars from their fossil hunt. These veteran fossil-hunters had screens for sifting the sand in the stream and told us about their fossil club, the Delaware Valley Paleontological Society. For 15 or 20 dollars we joined and received a monthly newsletter describing club trips. We've been members for a few years and have met folks very eager and willing to share their knowledge.

I've become the adult member of a changing group of homeschooled and schooled explorers who continue to explore from spring to fall each year. My interest in geology and paleontology has grown at a natural pace, as one clue leads to another. A friend found a book on sharks' teeth at a flea market. I read the book and called the author, a New Jersey resident, who told me of another New Jersey site and casually hinted that there was amber in New Jersey. A few months later, I read an article in our regional newspaper stating that the oldest gilled mushroom ever found was just discovered in amber in our county. It pushed back the age of gilled mushrooms 60 million years! I said to myself, "If amber is being found in our county, I'm going to find out where." I called one of the rock hunters mentioned in the article, who happened to be the author of the shark teeth book. No answer. I called the curator of the geology museum; he was tight lipped. I called the scientist mentioned in the article, who was from the Museum of Natural History in New York and was publishing the find in a scholarly journal. He was out of the country, but his secretary asked me if I was referring to the X-ville site (I'm leaving out the specific name here). Thus she revealed the name to me, so I was getting closer. I asked the manager of our local rock and fossil

shop to call me if anyone knew anything. The next week, the manager called to tell me he had directions to the site.

The first time we went, we found the author of the shark book and an assistant, who showed us how to find the lignite layer, from which we would extract the amber baubles (lignite is plant matter on the way to becoming coal). We've found hundreds of pieces, and with fine grades of sandpaper we smoothed them to reveal tiny gnats, flies, plant parts. We took about five specimens to the Museum of Natural History to be identified. The entomologist there said that our 13-year-old explorer, Dmitry, had the best specimen of the 90-million-year old "florid fly" yet found.

This is science – not reading about science but doing it! I'm a homeschooler too, no different from the kids, pursuing leads and following up on my curiosity. What's interesting is that although I believe I wouldn't have gotten interested in fossils if I hadn't been a homeschooling father, the interest has now become my own, so much so that I would keep pursuing it even if all the kids lost interest. Because of being a homeschooling father, I set aside a certain amount of time to be accessible to my kids and to do things with them – but then, ironically, because of having that luxury of open-ended time, I too have the opportunity to explore, for myself, something that I wouldn't have gotten into otherwise.

Inspired to Set Goals

From Audrey Dittberner (MV)

I had set some goals in life but never really followed through with many of them. Recently, my 17-year-old son Forest started listening to Zig Ziglar's eight motivational cassettes called "See You at the Top." Wow! He'd play them throughout the day and started setting goals for himself. It rubbed off on me. I started setting my own goals. One of my goals is to own my own life – to be independently healthy and wealthy and to spend more time with my family. I choose my own part-time hours with my family in our home-based business, which is about empowering people to become wealthy and really healthy with great energy and vitality through a rapidly expanding international network marketing company called Royal BodyCare. Now every day our entire family listens to motivational or positive thinking tapes. Our goals and dreams are happening!

Another example of being inspired by my children: Selena, my 14-year-old daughter, wanted to improve her cursive writing, so she worked on it daily. I too wanted to improve my handwriting, because so many times I couldn't read what I had written, and certainly others couldn't read it either. How frustrating! As I helped Selena with her cursive writing, I worked on my own. Now we write together, which makes me more conscious of writing neatly.

I have learned more from Forest and Selena than I ever dreamed possible. They are an inspiration to me, motivating me to stretch and grow in an unlimited number of positive ways. ◆

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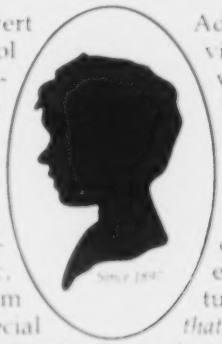

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Young People as Local Activists

Homeschoolers may not have a chance to run for student council president, but they have a great opportunity to be active and involved in the issues affecting their local communities. Here are two such stories.

Working with Town Conservation Commission

From Joanna Hoyt (ME):

I have been intrigued by politics for as long as I can remember. When George Bush ran against Michael Dukakis I was an enthusiastic 6-year-old and watched all the debates, though I understood little of what was going on. I was fascinated by the idea that we got to pick someone to decide if laws could get passed or not and that they were going to argue so we could learn all about them. I wished that I could vote.

As I grew older I realized that the President in fact didn't know who I was or what I thought about important issues. At the same time, I was becoming more and more aware of issues that were urgent and that affected me. I was terrified about nuclear war and had nightmares about it as a 7-year-old, and my mother finally suggested that I write a letter to our Senator, then-Majority Leader George Mitchell, about my concerns. The next day I sent off a carefully composed note introducing myself, explaining my fears and asking what he was doing and what I could do. I was amazed and delighted when I received an answering letter in less than two weeks thanking me for writing to him, stating his concern for all his constituents, and saying that he would keep me and others who shared my fears in mind when making decisions that affected nuclear policy. He encouraged me to write to my state and local officials and to the President about my political opinions. I was thrilled. I knew how to write letters. Now I could really make a difference!

It was in the same year that I first wrote a letter to the editor of my local paper. It was a very short piece about unschooling, written for National Homeschooling Week, and I was euphoric. Now hundreds of people could hear what I had to say! Over the next few years I continued happily making my voice heard. When I was 9 I testified against a proposed bill that would have made homeschooling laws in Maine more restrictive, and I continued to write frequent letters to the editor, often on controversial topics.

The year that I was 11 and 12 was the year I became involved in the politics of my town. Near our house there was a large wooded area, known as Morgan Meadow, that had been logged in some areas during the early 1950s and was now growing up to forest again under the protection of the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife. My family enjoyed walking in the woods, gathering birchbark, fungi, wintergreen, and mint and watching insects in the brooks and ravens on the glacial outcroppings of rock. The area had been left to nature for at least thirty years when we learned that the IF&W was preparing to actively manage the area in the interest of timber harvesting and providing habitat for game species.

I was concerned about what effects the changes could have on some of the nongame species and wanted to be in on the decision-making process in any way that I could. My father had been sporadically attending the monthly meetings of the town's Conservation Commission, an open-to-all volunteer organization, and since it was almost time for the September meeting my mother suggested that I could find out more about it there. I went with great excitement and trepidation. I was afraid that the level of the discussion would be over my head, that I would ask stupid questions or that nobody else would understand my concerns.

I was relieved to find Morgan Meadow at the top of the agenda. Two of the Committee members talked about the current state of the meadow, and I was able to add in a little bit about what I had seen. I had to ask them to define terms more than once, but when I asked the first time one of the adults present thanked me for asking the speaker and said he hadn't understood either. Then we discussed what we thought should be done with the land. There was quite a wide range of opinion. Some of the people present were in favor of using it at the highest sustainable level, a few others (myself included) wished to leave it be as much as possible, and there were several opinions in between. After a couple of hours of negotiation the Committee composed a letter to the IF&W stating that the extent of timber harvest mentioned in the tentative manangement plan was not necessary to provide deer browse, making other corrections about the present state of the Meadow, and offering to keep an eye on Morgan Meadow and report any concerns to the IF&W. It didn't go as far as I had hoped it would, but at least I could see that my arguments had influenced it and that some of my concerns were being sent through with the weight of the Committee behind them. At the time I overestimated that weight, but it was immensely satisfying anyway. Unfortunately the Management Plan was not much affected by the recommendations. Still, I have staved on the Committee and become more involved in its activities, and I have also started attending meetings of the town selectmen when conservation i . being discussed and asking pointed questions.

Through my involvement with the Conservation Committee I have learned patience and how to argue a

point without coming across as obstreperous. I also have learned about local work that I can do. I am currently taking a course on water monitoring and conservation, and I expect to begin monitoring the brooks of Morgan Meadow this summer and working with the IF&W. Where I can work myself, I know that I can make a difference.

Feeding the Hungry; Working with Service Organization

From Steve Theberge (MA):

I got involved with Food Not Bombs about a year and a half ago, when I was still in school. I'd read a bit about it and I'd gone to a presentation by one of its founders, and it seemed really interesting. It's a group that redistributes food that would otherwise have been wasted (because restaurants or cafeterias would have thrown it out) to the community by serving one meal a week in a park downtown. The food is all free, and the organization is an all-volunteer organization.

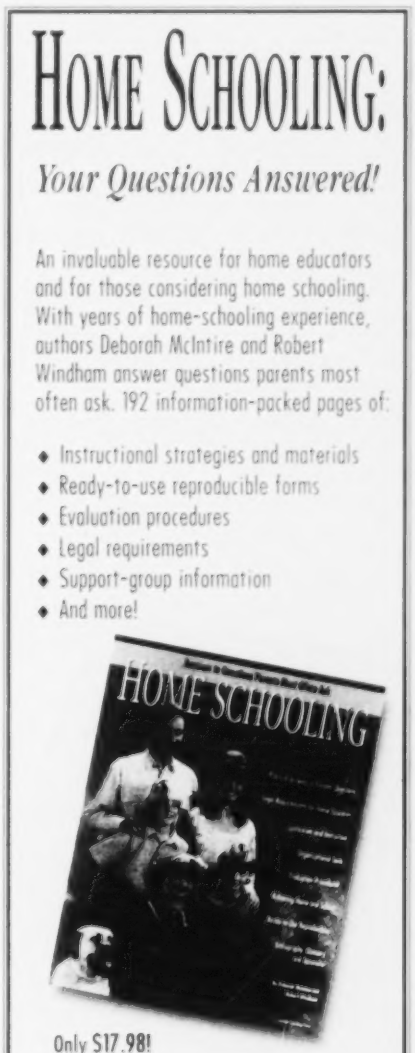
I started by going to the servings and helping out. Then I started helping out with the cooking, too, which we do at one of the member's apartments. Every Sunday I go and cook for a couple of hours, and then we serve the meal for another couple of hours. We serve anywhere from 10 to 50 people, depending on the season.

Though I started working with Food Not Bombs when I was in school, since beginning homeschooling a few months ago, I've been able to go more consistently, because I don't have homework getting in the way. This work is important to me because it's one thing I can do that actually makes a visible, direct change in my community. A lot of other stuff I do involves theorizing and talking, sometimes about changes that might happen a hundred years down the road, but serving meals to hungry people in my community is something I can do right now. It's also a way to build community, which is something I strongly believe in.

After I left school in January, I also began an internship at the American Friends Service Committee. I had gotten to know the local director, and I told her that I had started homeschooling and would like to do an internship in her office. She said that would be great, so I went in soon afterwards and started doing office work – writing press releases, making photocopies, helping out in whatever way I could. I go in one day a week. Though AFSC is a national organization, each office can work on local issues, and we're working with things like the living wage campaign in a town near mine and with a coalition of groups who are trying to end homelessness in this area.

Now that I'm out of school, I have the time, the energy, and the availability to do work like this. I can focus on things that I really enjoy and think are important. I like working on local issues because I'd rather work with people who face issues similar to mine, and while it's also important to work on national compaigns, it's important for me to be able to work in my own community too. When I say "my community," I mean my town and a couple of surrounding towns. In school, your view is much narrower; your daily life is just that one building, and you don't get to interact with anyone else or to think of anything else as your community.

Now I like having the chance to interact with more adults, and there are definitely some who are incredibly supportive both of my homeschooling and of my working with political action groups. I've learned a lot from some of the adults I've worked with. Others, though, are more condescending; their attitude is more like, "You can do this small task while we go out and do the real jobs." Some of them treat my activism or my political views as though I'm going through a phase. It's hard to deal with this, but one thing I can do is try to prove I'm a responsible person by offering to take on the larger jobs, or calling when I can't come to a meeting – just doing all the things that would be expected of any responsible person. I know that a lot of adults are scared of young people or think we're all lazy, so I can try to prove them wrong. ◆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Challenges & Concerns

Parents' Work Arrangements: Splitting Shifts

Ilene Heller wrote in the March 1997 New York City Home Educators' Alliance Newsletter:

Our strategy for economic survival as a homeschooling family can probably be summed up in one phrase: "tag team parenting." My husband, a carpenter, works Monday through Friday, day shift. I'm a nurse and do some per diem day shifts on weekends and weekday evenings.

Although this sounds very convenient and comfortable, we're aware that it's a somewhat fragile arrangement. In an era of cutbacks and downsizing it can collapse like the proverbial house of cards – and we've come uncomfortably close a couple of times.

Several times during the past five or six years I've been offered well-paying, full-time weekday jobs. Each and every time I've said, "No, I'm sorry, I can't accept your offer. We do homeschooling and I'm needed at home." Did I experience a twinge of regret? You bet – each and every time – especially when I thought of those unexpected mini-crises that life throws at you every once in a while. The ones that aren't quite so intimidating if you have a little extra cash on hand, not to mention double health insurance coverage.

However, the financial ramifications of homeschooling are not all on the downside. They've made us differentiate more clearly between wants and needs – an important distinction for any child (or adult for that matter) to make.

Like everyone else, we're coupon-clippers, bulk buyers and hand-me-down acceptors. We seldom eat out and our vacations are rather bare-bones (though fun and cherished nonetheless). We try to take advantage of discounted and/or free activities, and NYCHEA has been a big help in this endeavor. This has also given our son the opportunity to learn an important economic/ethical lesson: "There's no such thing as a free lunch. If you're not paying for something, someone else is. While we may benefit from an occasional freebie, we are not automatically entitled to them and are obligated to eventually give something of ourselves back." So, we always take note of donor lists and make sure to contribute regularly to our favorite charities, which makes us feel rich even if we aren't.

The economic realities of homeschooling also necessitate delay of gratification. I was concerned that repeatedly saying, "We can't afford that right now" would generate resentment in a young child. Thus far it hasn't; what it has generated is a lot of pleasant "wishful planning" while poring over catalogs and travel brochures. The economics of homeschooling have also made us realize that Robert doesn't have to "be exposed to" everything before the age of 18. There are things and experiences he can garner for himself as an adult – and he'll probably appreciate them more as a result.

Finally, I suspect that the financial veracities of homeschooling have made us actually live our articulated philosophies – in effect, putting our money where our collective mouth is.

Mother Learns to Understand Her Child

Carolyn Ellis of Texas writes:

From the very beginning, my oldest daughter Mary and I butted heads. Completely oblivious of what might serve Mary's needs and desires, I set about constructing what I thought would be a great curriculum for her: thirty minutes of "number work" in the morning, thirty minutes of "letter work" in the afternoon was all I had in mind. I knew Mary was a genius about coming up with projects and play, so free time was not a concern. I was also sure that Mary's own desire to know and investigate would open up numerous other topics and areas of study that I had not mapped out for her.

The problem was that from the outset, this little 6-year-old of ours was just not taken in by my low-key alternative agenda at all. She deeply resented the fact that for all my talk about learning whatever she wanted to, I was still clearly calling all the shots. Being just as independent as I am, the last thing Mary wanted was to have to put up with working under my direction. A few minutes a day measuring windows, reading stories that I wrote for her, using math manipulatives, were all a bust as far as Mary was concerned.

It turned out that what Mary really wanted was to be like everybody else. She craved textbooks like her friends, a pile of workbooks, tests, report cards, everything I stood against. Finally, after two years of struggle, I decided to try and get out of Mary's way and start paying more attention to what she wanted. Her first desire was for a packaged curriculum, but I got her to see that a so-called curriculum was nothing more than a set of books. We could easily assemble whatever set of books she might want, I explained. This strategy appeared to work fine, until Mary turned 12, by which time we finally had to move beyond thrift-shopped texts, used book sales, and an occasional workbook. The time had come for what Mary considered more serious-looking material: a Saxon math text, a three-inch thick literature book, a grammar text.

To my dismay, this year things deteriorated even more. Mary made a full-blown pitch for a full-service curriculum. I figured it was time to listen to what she wanted. Against our better judgment, my husband and I shelled out $450 for the curriculum Mary wanted. It drove me nuts that we were sinking all that money into what I considered a pile of useless, pedantic trivia, but what could I do? It seemed reasonable that if six years of dialogue hadn't "converted Mary" to seeing that living and learning need not be confined to a prescribed set of texts, then surely it was time to give her a chance

to try things her way.

Mary loves the curriculum. That's Mary: logical, analytical, competitive, perfectionistic. It's taken me all these years to validate her and accept that she works completely differently than I do. Mary's next goal? The U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland.

An interesting sidebar to this tale is that our other children are all happy unschoolers, entirely immersed in living/playing/building/pretending/investigating and see no reson at all for the hours of book work, tests, reports, etc., that Mary thrives on. Currently our 7, 9, and 12 year olds enjoy playing with their dogs, doing various science experiments, reading, doing carpentry, browsing/delighting in our two encyclopedias, writing long stories, making music, painting, hiking, learning Spanish, and, of course, playing. Three or four days a week they do 20-30 minutes of formal studies.

I confess that it has taken me years to get detached and flexible enough to be truly helpful to our children. With Mary, my own dominant personality and passionate ideas about learning managed almost completely to obsture the needs and desires of the child in front of me. It was a humiliating experience to admit that my way was not the only way, but thanks to Mary's own strong personality, I was indeed forced to admit that there is more than one educational road out there. Forced to put aside my goals and plans, I finally learned how to pay attention to each child and supply appropriate encouragement and support according to who that particular child is and how he or she works. I must say it sure is a lot more peaceful around here now that Mom has repented of her narrow mindedness!

Finding the Right Environment for Son with ADHD

Donna Parker (IN) writes:

My son Justin did not have the ability to adjust to the transition from elementary school (fifth grade) to middle school (sixth grade). He was completely stressed out and was having difficulty eating and sleeping. He had been sent from a friendly, supportive environment into a hostile, overcrowded one that was lacking any type of support. He went from loving school to hating it.

He had been taking Ritalin for ADHD (three 20 mg doses daily). I accepted the fact that he needed the first two doses to get through the long school day, but I had a problem with giving the third dose after school to enable the completion of meaningless busywork homework assignments that were only a repetition of what he had done at school that day.

After countless negative encounters regarding behavior and homework assignments and unproductive conferences with his teachers, I withdrew him in the first month of school. During the first week of homeschooling, we weaned him off much of his medication because he was showing signs of being overmedicated. He now takes only one 10mg dose daily.

At first we felt it necessary to adhere to a daily schedule and curriculum, but it didn't take long to realize that this was not going to work for us. We are now nearing the end of our second year of homeschooling and are taking a relaxed attitude toward it. I feel at times that my husband has a difficult time accepting this relaxed attitude, but he has remained supportive of my philosophy.

We are using the Saxon method for math. Even though Justin does not like to do math, he is able to apply it to other situations when he needs it. I know he has the potential to learn higher math when and if he chooses to. Right now, he spends a great deal of his time reading. If he becomes interested in a particular subject, he will research it for weeks or months. An example of this is his Egyptian studies. He did extensive reading, did art projects including drawings, carvings, clay sculpting, creating a diorama that included construction of a miniature pyramid, studied plant life, irrigation systems, climate, and weather conditions, made paper, designed and made costumes, headdresses, and masks, and learned about cultural and religious beliefs. He was intrigued with hieroglyphs and often wrote messages and created books using this method. He learned about the process of mummification, watched videos about Egypt, and often visited an excellent Egyptian exhibit and gift shop at a nearby museum. He covers all new interests in this manner. His projects seem endless, and he goes about them with such zeal and exuberance.

When we first started homeschooling, he felt that he was different, but he has grown more comfortable since meeting other homeschoolers here. He does most of his socializing with non-homeschoolers, and this doesn't appear to be an issue. He socializes at the Boys and Girls club every day for a few hours and goes skating with his friends on weekends. And because he has had the freedom to meet adults through many of his activities, he has learned to trust and like them.

We are taking a year at a time in assessing Justin's needs. I don't ever envision him being happy or successful in a classroom setting, but things change. I know we averted a lot of problems by intervening quickly and not allowing his negative school experiences to escalate. ◆

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Focus

In Defense of Doing Nothing

Thinking, imagining, planning, and reflecting are all crucial activities, but not always visible ones, especially to worried adults. With this in mind, we asked several young readers to tell us what they get out of doing nothing – or rather, appearing to be doing nothing.

Envisioning What He Wants to Build

From Nathan Post (VT):

Sometimes I will spend time just lying around staring out the window or at the wall. I may be envisioning something that I would like to design and build in the future, turning it over in my mind, figuring out how different parts will fit together. I am seeing it and shaping and building the idea with my mind.

Often I plan out, in my mind, features that I have thought up for radio-controlled sailplanes and other projects. I come up with all sorts of ideas. Most of them I don't have the money, time, and skills to build and try. Sometimes I plan to try out my ideas in the future, and I will put thinking time into planning my hobby.

I also think about myself in general: where I want to go and what I want to do as I grow up and how I am going to reach those goals, although much I leave open because I don't know what all the options will be.

Most of the times when I look like I am not doing anything, I am thinking about things. However, occasionally I really am doing nothing, but I don't see this as being a problem. It can help me to calm down if I have just been rushing around. Sometimes it just feels good to do nothing for a while. When I have things that need to get done or things that I want to get done, I might have to pull myself into action and get going. Either way, it isn't an obsessive thing; it feels OK.

Nathan Post: "Sometimes it just feels good to do nothing."

Creating a Space for Ideas to Fill

From Emily Cooke of Oregon:

The clock ticks, slicing time into digits, and outside that sound is the continuous low call of the creek, its whispers muffled by the walls. My breath is low, and I pull my lungs outward as if by a cord, willing a deeper, stronger handful of oxygen. My hands are still by my sides.

I realize I am at it again: doing nothing at all, letting emptiness soak into the muscles of my face, the tension in my thoughts, the jabbering of my brain. One voice tickles my train of thought: "You do this too much, Em, for too long. You can't afford it. Not any more, OK?" And then the second voice comes: "Let the pen marks on your fingers

wash off, Emily, let the knot in your neck melt, let yourself go a little. You don't need to start whatever it is you think you need to do right this second; what's a few minutes, more or less? Relax ...".

There is a fine line to be drawn here, between losing track of my goal, my dream, my project, and getting too caught up in details and deadlines and actions, unable to let myself enjoy the absence of busy fingers and a busy mind. Today I have accomplished nearly nothing concrete at all, but in my head at various times I have peeked at the persuasive essay I am planning to write tomorrow, have been gearing up for the Spanish I want to work on later, going over words and sentences in my head as I wander the house. And as I listen to music in my room I am drifting off to the Dominican Republic in spirit, where I am building latrines, gardening, talking about my life in Oregon and their life in the unstable political climate there, and painting murals on dental health. I'll be there in the flesh this summer to volunteer for two months, and while that does give me a deadline for my Spanish, my fundraising, my overall preparation, it also creates the need for time like today – baggy clothes, no specific plans, a late waking-up this morning, a space to mentally and emotionally equip and ready myself for my summer. There are so many things I have to know before going, so many new situations I will face, so much learning I need to have to go down there and be capable of teaching and doing the work I must do. And before I leave there are a thousand details to be taken care of. In the midst of all the confusion, it is imperative that I have these few quiet moments to find my center, remember why I am going, and let my unconscious ruminate on the voyage I am undertaking.

I have always considered procrastination one of my vices, and I have been working on getting rid of the trait for a long time. Yet now I am speculating that procrastination is simply a negative name given to something that could be essential to my creative and work processes. Instead of jumping right in with things, I often leave a space of a few hours, a few days, or even a few weeks, before starting or continuing it. Always before I have labeled this a fear of "just doing it," an unwillingness to do hard work, a laziness, perhaps, rather than something indispensible to my rhythm.

This open space before doing, this "being" before action, must be a needed part of my life. It creates an emptiness that ideas can eventually fill, a freedom from clogging busyness. It provides a period to prepare, to build reserves up, to grow before trying. This is a time when the unconscious takes control of whatever project I'm focusing on, a time for the hidden mind to play with the possibilities while the conscious mind sits back and wanders to other places, unaware of what is happening in the corners of its rooms.

Sometimes I can have this "nothing" attitude even while doing something. I can let the Big Important Thing on my mind sit on the back burner while I am cooking dinner, reading a book, or playing piano. Yet the pure "doing nothing" time – stillness, silence – is also important. It offers a deeper kind of openness that cannot be found while I'm doing anything else at the same time. I do not think these periods are so important that they must be scheduled or planned for, though. I would just say that they must be respected and guarded, for they will occur on their own and need to be understood as valuable, not written off as hesitancy or stalling.

The clock ticks on, the small noise absorbed by the waters in my tea mug. I lift the ceramic cup to my lips and drink slowly. I will take my time here, and let my thoughts loiter as they please.

Taking a Break from a Difficult Project

From Caitlin Fahey (NM):

I've been playing the cello for nine years. I started when I was 6 and now I'm 15. I've taken private lessons with the same teacher all this time, and I'm also involved in several local programs such as a string quartet and a youth orchestra.

This past year, I've been working on a piece that was originally written for violin. Violin pieces usually have a fast, showy, soloistic bit called a cadenza. A cadenza is hard to play on a cello, because cellos are bigger than violins. You aren't able to move around as quickly on a cello. The cadenza in the piece was giving me heck, so I quit playing it altogether for about three or four days.

Those days were invaluable, because I had time to give my mind and my fingers a rest from the monotony of playing a single piece over and over. During that time, I also listened to a recording of a professional violinist playing the piece, which helped me to form an idea in my mind of how to interpret the music. When I came back to the piece, I was very excited about it and dying to play it. I practiced it the morning before my lesson and then played it better than ever during my lesson later in the day.

Often when I am doing an activity or working on a paper for a science class that I am taking at the local magnet school, it helps to take a break, even if it's very short, when I don't understand or when I am in a mental

This open space before doing, this "being" before action, must be a needed part of my life. It creates an emptiness that ideas can eventually fill, a freedom from clogging busyness. It provides a period to prepare, to build reserves up, to grow before trying.

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rut. Instead of pounding things into my brain, I take some time to do other things and let my mind absorb the previous information before carrying on. I come back refreshed and with new enthusiasm.

Telling Stories to Himself

From Eoin Gaj (MA):

When I look like I'm doing nothing, I'm really doing something. For example, when I lie in bed before I get up in the morning, I often think about what happened the day before, like a new step I learned in ballet or a song I practiced in play rehearsal.

Another time I look like I'm doing nothing important, but really am, is when I'm shooting baskets. When I shoot baskets, I tell stories to myself, and I love telling stories. When I can't run around and tell stories, I feel sad and it makes me an unpleasant person to be around.

My days are the opposite of one of my soccer teammates' days in school. When I'm telling myself a story about how I'm hitting a grand slam out of Fenway Park to win the game, Jamie is in school being told that he'll have to miss recess again because of his behavior. He comes to soccer practice with a big weight on his back; when I come to practice I almost float. When a kid laughed at me in practice, I was angry but not furious, because I was still happy from my day. If that same kid had laughed at Jamie, there would have been a fight.

Designing and Drawing in His Mind

From Andy Linn (MI):

I build a lot of things with Legos, and sometimes I just sit and think for a couple of hours about what gears should go where. Sometimes I'll sit in my room with my Legos spread out all over the floor and look at them and think about what I'm going to do. Or sometimes something I've seen gives me an idea of what to build. For example, when I was in Italy with my parents, we took a tour of a fort, and when I came home I built a similar fort out of Legos. I had to spend a lot of time thinking about and visualizing the fort before I built it.

Often, the thinking is the hardest part. For artwork, the hardest part is designing it in your mind beforehand, imagining how it's going to look. First I have to think of what my subject is going to be, and then I visualize what I'm going to paint or draw. When I'm riding in the car, I like to look out the window and think, and sometimes I'm thinking about what I'm going to draw. Sometimes I think about drawing when I'm taking a walk, too. I might see an interesting view of a tree and then decide to draw it, so I would spend some time planning in my mind how the drawing will look. It takes time to think it out.

Often, I spend some time doing a part of a drawing, and then I'll take a break before finishing it. For example, I'll draw the subject and then come back later and draw the background. And sometimes, if I've been working for a long time and it's not going well, I'll take a break and *not* think about it for a while, and then come back and find that it's easier to finish. Thinking is important, but sometimes it's as if you've *overthought* an idea, and then it's good to stop thinking about it at all for a while.

I've been thinking of going into the field of architecture, which would combine my interest in building with my interest in drawing. I know that spending time visualizing designs in your mind is important for architecture. I'm also interested in computer programming, which to me is a kind of building, and thinking time is important there, too.

Reflecting on How She's Changed

From Lydia Simas of New Jersey:

I can easily justify it to myself if I spend a lot of time just lying around and thinking, because I know that that's when I'm figuring out a lot about life and about myself. I often think over things that have happened – I'll think about how other people reacted in a certain situation or how I reacted, and by running it through my mind over and over, I get a better idea of what was going on and if I overreacted or not.

When I read the book *Reviving Ophelia*, I began thinking a lot about how much I had changed in the years between age 9 and age 12 (I'm 15 now). The book is about the challenges that adolescent girls face, and I realized that during those years, I started thinking more about what other people thought of me and about how to fit into society. When I read the book at age 13 or so, I started looking back on those years and thinking about them, and since then I've thought a lot about how I interact with people. I think about why I'm shy or self-conscious in certain situations and not in others. Just being aware of it helps – being aware of how different people affect me – and then I can also think about how to change if I realize that I'm not acting the way I want to act. For example, I realized that a lot of times I feel more comfortable around adults than around people my own age because I don't have to prove myself to adults, whereas with a lot of teenagers, I feel like I do have to prove myself.

Also, if I'm feeling really busy and stressed out about a project, it helps to take a break and not think about it for a while. I discovered this recently when I was planning a homeschoolers' weekend get-together with three other teenagers. I was the one in charge of all the financial aspects of the weekend – keeping track of whether people had paid their registration money, sending the deposit in to the place where we were having the get-together, giving the money to the people who were going to be cooking the meals. I liked doing a lot of the work, but then little problems started coming up here and there, and I caught myself feeling that I had to be the one to do everything, so I decided to take a day or two off and not think about it at all. Afterwards I was able to come back to it and not feel so stressed out. ◆

Watching Children Learn

Preparing for Spelling Bee

Karen Raskin-Young (AZ) writes:

In January, Jeremy (12) asked if I minded if he weren't a spelling champion. I said, "Not at all." Though I achieved local fame in school spelling bees, I long ago decided that the only aspect that was important to me was that Jeremy learn to be an adequate speller, because spelling is a useful life skill. The question came up because our local homeschooling group has a spelling bee that ties in to the national bee, and Jeremy would have a chance to participate in it if he wanted to.

We have never done much work on spelling. When Jeremy was in second grade, I tried to give him some brief written spelling tests. This became too cumbersome because the physical act of writing was difficult for him. We gave it up – no need to mix up two skills at once when the difficult one had little to do with spelling itself. We tried oral spelling, but that ended a few days later when I realized that Jeremy loved language and had a good awareness of it, could spell lots of words and usually asked about the ones he didn't know.

In fourth grade, his spelling knowledge seemed especially weak, so we bought a fourth-grade spelling workbook. Jeremy enjoyed it and learned from it but, to keep it from becoming tiresome, we strolled through it and didn't complete it until the end of the next year. He still frequently forgot some common words, but doing another workbook seemed like overkill. I sometimes listed words he misspelled repeatedly and asked him to look them up and do a little work with them; otherwise, we were finished with spelling except for a few lessons in spelling rules from a college text I taught from (the lessons were definitely not college-level, but remedial – the college students hadn't learned them either).

A year ago, just prior to last year's spelling bee, we obtained the spelling bee book. Some of the words were so scary (even to me) that we decided Jeremy would wait a year to enter the bee, which would give us plenty of time to go over the book. Even so, we made little headway in the 29 lists. We mostly spelled through easy words and a small collection of harder ones that Jeremy needed practice on. One homeschooling father told us that learning spelling rules was all there was to it, but we discovered that spelling rules actually helped with very few of the words. Most were just weird and needed to be memorized, or sometimes we spotted patterns that helped with later words. Had we realized that few of the hard words are used at the beginning levels of the bee, Jeremy probably could have entered confidently last year.

As it was, he not only nervously entered this year but actually won his first bee. This qualified him to participate at the county level against schooled kids. To our surprise, he won this bee, too. He took home a trophy, some prize money, and the opportunity to participate at the state level (sending us back to the spelling bee book). This time, with a lot of time-consuming effort, we followed Jeremy's plan and spelled through the whole book. There was no chance to memorize every word (some of which we'll never see anywhere again), but we gave it a good effort, and Jeremy entered the state spelling bee knowing more words than he had previously and being as prepared as was possible.

There were three homeschoolers in the state bee, all of whom did well. Jeremy came in third, missing, interestingly enough, on a word that was not on the list (they include many such words, especially at the more advanced levels). He came home with a huge trophy, more money, a dictionary, and a fair amount of satisfaction. He had really wanted to win because his goal was to earn us a trip to Washington (where the state winner competes next). However, he's decided to try again next year. Even though all the spelling work was tedious (and some of it meaningless), we both sort of miss it. Spelling words are floating around in our heads with no place to go, though we have discovered many of the more useful ones in recent reading, which reinforced both their spellings and their meanings for us. Jeremy has a new game plan, and we will probably begin preparing for the next bee sometime soon.

It's interesting to us to see how far he's gone and how much he's accomplished with very little spelling work in his homeschooling. I've thought of him before as a good speller but not a great one. Most of his learning of spelling is very recent and was in support of his spelling bee goals. Regardless of the outcome, the practices, the winning, and the losing have all been rich learning experiences – in more areas than just spelling.

Friendship Between a Homeschooler and a School Student

Julia Bergson-Shilcock (PA) writes:

As a homeschooler whose best friend goes to school, I was very interested in the Focus discussion in GWS #103 on this topic. My friend

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Andrea (I call her "Midgles" or "Midge" for short because that is what she is – short!) and I have been friends since we were 3 years old. We are now 15 so we have had a long time to get to know each other. She has gone to school since third grade; I have been a homeschooler all along.

It seems to me that one of the best parts of our relationship is the way we add to each other's lives by coming from two different academic worlds. We help each other explore new areas, we sympathize and support each other when it's needed, and we encourage each other when we're feeling stuck.

Midge and I met 12 1/2 years ago when she started to attend my parents' educational resource center. She didn't begin school until the third grade, but our friendship was already underway by then. I believe that one of the many reasons that Midge is such a special friend to me is because of this early start and because we have shared so many young childhood experiences together. That has given us a basis for understanding each other.

For example, Midge really understands how I homeschool. All of my other school friends think that I never leave the house, but Midge understands that I do some of my learning at home but lots of it out in the real world. Specifically, she understands that when I'm volunteering at an inner-city elementary school, I'm not there just to teach little kids for their benefit; I'm also there to benefit myself. She knows I learn about their different culture, about child development, about leadership skills, etc.

Because of our long-time friendship, we are also able to help each other when we need it. Sometimes I help her with her homework, which she can have tons of. (One time I helped her by accident: I was talking in an off-handed way about a local high school boy who was going to skip college and play professional basketball. His name was Kobe Bryant. The next day, Midge was taking a current events test in school, and one of the questions was, "What is the name of the high school player who is going to play in the NBA?" She never reads the sports page, so she wouldn't have gotten that answer right if I hadn't told her about Kobe.

By being friends, we've also introduced each other to new groups of people who share our values. This has been especially helpful to me when I have felt really stuck because so many of the teenagers whom I've met through sports activities are drinking (and getting very drunk) on the weekends. Both Midge and I think this is really dumb. We also share the same concerns about dishonesty and discrimination.

The friends I have met through Midge seem to share these values and are generally more accepting people. If my choice of friends were limited to other homeschoolers and the school kids I already knew, I would still be very frustrated. I have been able to find a couple of close friends who are homeschoolers, but the majority of homeschoolers I've come in contact with over the years don't really share my interests and many of them are a few years younger than I am. This isn't always bad – I do have some friends who are younger and we get along great – it's just that I have a different kind of friendship with them than what I look for with my peers.

Lastly, Midge and I are able to comfort one another and help each other keep perspective when we're feeling out of sorts. For example, I helped Midge develop a rational perspective on her homework. She's a good student, very conscientious, and she didn't used to make the distinction between the homework that would help her continue to expand her knowledge and the homework that was done just to say she did it. I encouraged Midge to keep her long-time vision on her life goals. Because her aspiration is to be a professional flutist, she needs to practice many hours a day to keep improving. She often doesn't have time for all of her homework. She has felt frustrated because she thought she had to get all of her homework done every night and then try to fit in all of the practicing that she needs (wants) to do.

I asked her, if flute were really more important to her than some of her schoolwork, and if she really wanted to be a flutist when she grew up, did she honestly think that if she went to an audition to get into an orchestra, they wouldn't let her in

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because she didn't know some chemistry formula?

I don't try to make her think all schoolwork is bad and a waste of time; I just try to keep reminding her that she doesn't need to waste time on stuff that she probably won't ever use again. I try to have her think about it as if she were in college. In college, when you decide on your major – let's say it's English – you don't need advanced chemistry or math to graduate once you've fulfilled your basic requirements. Additionally, Midge is planning to go to a music college such as Curtis or Juilliard, where she won't be expected to use a lot of the usual academic material.

I'm happy that my best friend comes from such a different academic world than mine. It gives both of us a taste of what another educational lifestyle is like without our going into it full-fledged. It's also great that we can both share our similarities and benefit from our differences.

Pursuing Interest in Cartooning

Nathaniel Daught (MB) writes:

I am 12 years old and have never gone to school. I like comic books, and I hope to work for a comic book company someday as a penciler. I have met a freelance comic book inker here in my town who worked for DC most recently on Hawkman and Deathstroke. I visited his home where he works. I have been working on comic book drawings myself for several years. I have written some descriptive sketches of my characters.

One reason I came up with all these characters is because on Thursdays (and sometimes more often) a homeschool friend, Skelly, comes over and we have a sort of acting group where we each play a character that we have made up. We talk on the phone during the week to plan our story lines. Micah, my youngest brother, is also part of this. In the basement we have a set including Operations, transporters, holding cell, holosuite, and sick bay. I built it myself out of used computer parts, cardboard, an old mattress, and lots and lots of masking tape. I have also made miniature models of the bases where our characters live and work. I made them out of cardboard, hot glue, fun foam and more hot glue.

While we play out the parts, we get lots of exercise from running and jumping. Skelly teaches us some judo and karate. Time flies while we are together! We have time to do the things we are interested in because we don't go to school every day and all day.

How a 10-Year-Old Homeschools

April Matilsky (NJ) sent us an essay about how she goes about studying each subject:

Geography: Recently I discovered that I wanted to learn geography. I wanted to learn it because I didn't know the difference between north and south, east and west. I had no idea where anything was. When people talked about longitude and latitude, I didn't know what they were talking about. My grandmother sent us some Valentine money, and with it I got a game called "Where in the World," which helps people learn geography. I decided to study the largest country in Asia. I found out that that country is Russia, and lo and behold, up in our attic were two books: *The Arts of Russia* and *The History of Russia* (Mom told me that these books were in the attic). I am now reading *The History of Russia* for an hour each day and taking notes. Nobody told me to do this. I ask for help when I need it. I have a friend whose father is Russian, and I might ask him some questions about Russia. I also will study and research Russia on my own. I do not have to wait for classmates to catch up to me; I can decide that I would rather study China today; I do not have to catch up to other students; I don't need to take an unwanted test. When I am older, I want to go backpacking or bicycling (like my older sister) across the country and learn about the states by seeing them.

A while ago, my friend Sam, who is my age (10) and also homeschools, and I decided that we would study together regularly. We decided this, and set up a time to do it, without anyone telling us to. I was interested in studying with Sam because I wanted to do more "schoolwork" than Mom was doing with me, and I wanted to do it with someone else, because it's more fun that way and because Sam and I are probably at the same level we would be if we were in school, so it seemed right that he and I could study together. For geography, we recently played *Game of the States*, and we learned when various states joined the union, when they were first settled, and what their capitals are. We learned this from the game cards which have all this information on them. We took the cards and tried to memorize them. An advantage of working with someone else is that Sam could ask me the capitals of the states and correct me when I was wrong.

Anatomy: I decided to study anatomy after finding out that there are so many different body parts. This is another subject I studied with Sam. Last week, we sat down and did an experiment that we had gotten out of one of my anatomy books. We drew a big blotch on a piece of paper with a pencil. Then we pressed our finger, toe, or palm on the blotch, and then put scotch tape on our finger (or toe or palm) so that a print came off on the tape. Then we stuck the tape on the paper and studied it. It was very interesting to see the many swirls and shapes on our fingers that we had never noticed before.

Today, I studied an anatomy book and read all of it because I wanted to and had the time. This is a big advantage of homeschooling. In school you have to switch from one subject to another. I can say to myself, "I studied a lot of geography yesterday. I think I'll do more anatomy right now." Or I can do neither one and spend the whole day reading.

Reading: Reading has always come easily to me. My parents were reading to me, so I suppose that must have sparked an interest in me. Also, if I wanted to play some games, I had to be able to read. And I wanted to be like the big kids. I decided that I wanted to read by myself, and then Mom supplied me with some workbooks that I asked her for. I also

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looked at signs when we went out. One day we went for a drive. I knew the shape and color of stop signs, and I memorized the letters on them. The next day I knew how to spell "stop." I would also ask friends how to spell their names and then memorize them.

I have read endless books now and love to read. I once tried reading a chapter a day of one book, and ended up reading the whole 23-chapter book in three or four days. For a while, I was teaching a little girl how to read and in exchange, her mother did bead-making with me. That didn't work for long because the girl didn't want to do it most of the time, but now I am helping my younger brother Matthew learn to read, and he is doing very well. It is easier to teach a 7-year-old than a 5-year-old, I think.

Writing: When I learned to read at about age 6, I was not interested in writing anything aside from my name. I knew how to write but was not interested until about a year later. I asked Dad to get me some paper at the store. He came home and apologized because it had lines. I realized that he apologized because a year ago I had been drawing a lot and never wanted any lines on my paper. But now I was wanting the lines, because I wanted to write.

When I was 7, I entered a story-writing contest for the first time. When I write, it is usually a story or a letter. I also learned to type when I was 7, I think. I used our typing book for a while, and then started teaching myself. I have just started typing with the book again, and I am trying to cure myself of some bad habits, but I mostly taught myself pretty well.

A few years ago I asked my mom if I could put my name in the pen-pal list in GWS. She said that if I wrote to some people on the list and could keep up with them, then I could put my name in afterwards. I wrote to three people. One person wrote only once, I lost the second person's address, and the third girl turned into a long-term pen-pal. She lived in Florida when we started writing but moved to New Jersey about a year later. We were able to meet and are now – I hope – lifelong friends. I did end up putting my name in the GWS list too, and got very involved with pen-pals.

I recently won a second prize for writing from *Cricket* magazine, to add to my two honorable mentions and third prize. I love writing stories for fun, and I intend to write books when I'm older, if not now. I am writing this article now because I decided to, and I didn't sit down and do it all in one day. It has been about two weeks now since I started, and I do not feel rushed because I have to finish it by Monday so that some teacher can decide what it's worth and grade me. I am going to ask Mom for help with grammar and spelling, because I need her help, but she is not here looking over my shoulder as I write, because she doesn't need to be. As I write it, over a period of days, I keep adding things. I wonder what this article would be like if I did it all in one day.

Every so often Dad will sit down and ask me spelling words (at my request). One time he was trying to find a word to stump me with and found it: Des Moines. I didn't spell it right, but now I will never forget it!

History: I became interested in Black history when I was at a friend's house and happened to pick up a book about Harriet Tubman. I read it from cover to cover that day and it was the first of many history books I was to read. The same friend lent me many Black history books, and I got Mom to read them to me. As my older sister and brother stopped to listen, they became interested too. I spent late nights taking notes on Blacks' and Women's history. I would like to write a history book, about either Black history, Women's rights, or both. Right now I am working on a story about a slave.

Math: On Monday and Thursday mornings, when my younger brothers are playing with a mother's helper, my older brother and I do schoolwork with Mom, which is in addition to whatever work we do on our own. I guess I shouldn't use the word "schoolwork" since I'm not in school, but to me, schoolwork basically means things you would do in school, such as geography, math, and such. During our time together, Mom and I often do fractions. Mom writes down fraction problems to solve. Sometimes we will discuss a hard problem that I don't understand. Other times we will just

see if a third is bigger than a fourth, and why, as 4 is more than 3. I am also learning how to multiply fractions. I never really liked math, but I do like fractions. Sometimes I do math flash cards by myself. We also have a math game called "The 24 game," and the whole family (except the very youngest) answers the problems together. It is a very good feeling to know that you solved an especially hard one. I think the advantage of learning math at home is that you can learn it at your own pace, and you know why 2 and 2 makes 4, instead of just knowing that it does.

I love homeschooling and think I will continue doing it throughout my childhood. I have been thinking about going to school for a more structured environment, but I am beginning to feel I don't want to go. As I wrote this article I became aware of all the advantages of homeschooling that I was explaining on paper. Yes, I think I will continue to have a childhood of freedom and child-led education because, from my point of view, nothing can beat that.

Homeschoolers' Carpentry Class

Daphne Slocombe (MA) writes:

Our homeschooling group is a lively bunch of people with lots of things we might do together, and it's been interesting to see which ideas take and which don't. One of our successful activities is a carpentry class. A woman in our group has done a good deal of building, and she and her husband are building their own house using only hand tools. She offered to do carpentry with the kids once a week. One of the goals of the class is for each family to design and build their own play structure (treehouse, platform, or playhouse) with help from the rest of the group.

Joanne, the woman in charge, is a naturally organized person, and this helped us get off to a good start. At the first meeting she had a display with photographs of all different kinds of play structures. Both children and parents spent time looking at the photos and deciding which ones they particularly liked. We talked about whether there were some common features among the structures we liked: were we drawn to enclosed houses or open platforms? Did we like windows or ladders? A feeling of secrecy or airiness?

Then Joanne asked us to daydream about our ideal playhouse and to sketch it in books she had given us. She said to start we shouldn't worry about practicality. After we had spent some time on this, Joanne introduced the kids to the idea of blueprints by showing them blueprints of her house and her 4-year-old daughter's blueprints for her playhouse. From this the children saw what blueprints are for and how they help you plan, but they weren't inhibited by seeing only professional ones.

At this point the meeting began to get disorganized as kids wanted to play together. Joanne was completely relaxed about this. While the kids played, Joanne told us what she could offer in terms of expertise, what we needed to think about in terms of budget, possible sources of materials, and so on. Then she brought out her tool kit and asked if the children would like to check out her tools. I didn't think they would want to come in from playing, but the moment she brought out her tools they zoomed in. She talked about each one and let them try an auger. They couldn't get enough of this. There was a magnetic attraction about real tools.

During the next classes, the parents and kids worked together to make tool boxes. The children were equipped with appropriate-sized saws, measuring tapes, work aprons, and hammers. Having the right sized tools made a big difference. For me, a good part of the fun of these sessions was working with other people's children. It's a great way for people of various ages to hang out together.

As each family continued to work individually on whatever structure they had planned, Joanne consulted with us and spent time with those who needed it. Last week we put up our first structure, a platform about seven or eight feet off the ground amidst a group of trees. The first work had to be done by adults, but the kids were always busy, orbiting around us in their play.

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Eventually the moment came when enough floorboards were in place for Jackie, the girl whose structure it was, to be lifted onto the platform. I'll never forget the look on her face as she got her first view from up there and felt the special tree-space that had been created. She set to work nailing down the floorboards. Soon other children joined her, until a line of them was hammering away – a great sight.

I think there are several things that have made this project a success. First, and I think most important, it grew out of something that one of us was passionately interested in. Joanne didn't take this on because she thought it would be good for the children; she did it because she loves doing it and enjoys sharing her pleasure with others. Second, she was realistic about the children's involvement. She thought of what would be interesting to them and what would help them visualize their own projects. She knew that during classes they would periodically drift away and get more interested in playing, and that was fine with her. That attitude was contagious, so parents got relaxed about working with whatever children were around and letting them come and go as their interest moved them.

Third, Joanne was organized and provided a plan for each week. Often good ideas die a-borning because there is no one person who feels she can or should generate the organization needed to make things happen. In our sessions, we have the materials we needed, we know what the day's goal is, we learn what to do. Joanne makes this happen, but she does it with a light touch.

Another unexpected reason for this project's success is that the adults are getting satisfaction out of it too. For years I've wanted to learn about building and working with wood. When we worked on Jackie's platform, I learned to use a chisel. A simple skill, yet handling the tools and the wood, I was completely happy. Others in the group have considerably more woodworking experience than I, but in this setting I'm completely comfortable asking questions, persisting until I can picture what is being planned or what the factors are that determine how something needs to be done. When the kids and I drive away from one of our carpentry sessions, we *all* feel good.

(Just after I finished writing this, we had another session in which we finished another small play structure. As usual, we drove away feeling great. But this time most of the kids didn't touch a tool. It was a beautiful day and all the kids played happily the whole time. It made me realize that my definition of a successful project has changed. A couple of years ago I would have felt that for a carpentry class to be successful, the children would spend most of every class doing carpentry. I don't think that way anymore. For me, this class is successful because it introduced my children to tools and woodworking and how to plan a project; they acquired some basic skills and self-confidence; the children got to know each other better; perhaps most important, they have been with a group of adults who worked harmoniously together to make a dream real. They have seen, early on, the power of a group of people to get things done.) ◆

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Unlearning School's Lessons: A Teenager's Story

Dori Griffin of Tennessee writes:

After homeschooling for several years, I went to a traditional school for the first time in the fourth grade. It had become absolutely necessary for both my siblings and me to go to school, because my mother was in the hospital for an undetermined length of time, and my dad had a full-time job that demanded long hours. We were enrolled in a small private school, and my three years of captivity started innocuously enough. I liked my teacher, made one or two close friends, and performed well scholastically. School was brand new and a little scary, but it was also exciting. Everything seemed so easy, and for a while I enjoyed being away from home so much of the time. Life had been in a constant state of confusion at home, and here my day was divided into neat little wedges. I could always be prepared for what would happen next.

Soon things calmed down at home; my mother was released from the hospital after only about a month. I stayed in school, as did my sister and brother. At this time, I simply assumed that I'd be in school all the way through high school graduation; it didn't occur to me that leaving again would be an option, and my parents didn't suggest it then. Meanwhile, school began to grate on me. I was always exhausted, and almost never home. Between the added commitments of dance classes, Girl Scouts, church, and after-school activities – to say nothing of homework and school itself – my life in school sapped me of any life of my own. In addition, I made enemies at school. To put things simply, I was different from my classmates and they didn't appreciate it. Having been homeschooled until fourth grade, I came into school with a strong sense of individuality, morality, and the importance of family. This is not to say it's impossible to develop these things in school, but somehow I always came out at odds with my school environment, mostly because of these particular issues.

I remember one day very early in my school experience with particular clarity. My class and my sister's were seated across from each other on the floor, and everyone was singing. I think we were practicing for a choral performance that we'd be putting on for our parents before Christmas vacation. I saw no reason that my sister couldn't move to sit beside me, or I couldn't move to be next to her. We'd always been together before, after all. My horrified classmates told me that everyone had to stay with their own class. Age segregation took on horrifying and immediate meaning.

Another episode illustrates the differences between school and home. I'd just taken my first spelling test at school. I'd taken spelling tests at home, and after I took them my mom always corrected them and we went over the words I'd missed to see what I did wrong. On the school test, the wrong words were marked with a large red X. No correct spelling, just a grade at the top of the page. I gazed at my paper in confusion for a moment, then across to my friend's page. Hers had no corrections, either, so I assumed that in school it didn't matter what you had done wrong and how you could do it right, it only mattered that you did not have the correct answer. You were either right or wrong, good or bad. It was final. No need to learn; all you had to do was make an arbitrary grade. Or so it seemed to me.

I soon adjusted to this way of learning – or what was called learning. Once my class had a substitute teacher who wished us to correct our papers. He would write and then solve each math problem on the board, and we were to fix our math homework accordingly. I saw no point in this exercise. A year ago I'd been stunned at the lack of opportunity for improvement and correction. Now I was annoyed that so pointless an exercise was being demanded of me. I had swallowed the system's definition of learning. Correction was useless. It made no difference in the grade at the top of the page. What was the reason for going through all the trouble?

I also easily absorbed other assumptions that the school wanted me to live by: My family was a fairly meaningless part of my life, and very

I have a strong sense of who I am, what I want to be doing, how I should be living. I can be myself, not someone else's image of who I should be.

embarrassing. I wanted nothing to do with them. Creativity was, for the most part, a waste of time, not at all rewarding and almost entirely useless. If there's one right answer and all the others are wrong, what is the use of being different? You're only wrong. Even teachers who verbally encouraged creativity belied their words by expecting a uniform end product from their class.

School left no time for *me*, for the things important to my inner well-being. No solitude, no time for play, no time to create, no time to rest, no time to think about anything but school. School had almost succeeded in making me into a mindless, robotic, indistinct product of their system. Almost, but not quite.

School and school's social life was painful, unjust and destructive – and I realized it in an unconscious way. My one close friend was another social misfit; no one else would have anything to do with her. At first, I didn't either. I tried to fit into the group of popular girls. Only one obstacle: their leader was my arch enemy. She was popular, with a circle of friends who always agreed with her and followed every move she made, and a larger circle of admirers who looked on with envy but never got close to being accepted. For a while, I was part of the latter group. It didn't settle well with me, though, and so I made friends with the most ostracized girl of all. We got along well, had fun together, stuck up for each other. It was better than nothing, but it wasn't enough.

After almost three years of school, I broke under the pressure of always being the odd one out, always having to act something I didn't feel – compliance – always wanting escape but never finding it. Clinically depressed and chronically sick with a sinus infection I had no energy to fight, I basically dropped out. I just didn't go to school. Fortunately, my parents allowed me this room. They offered to let me withdraw from school and be homeschooled, but at first I refused. Deep down inside, something still whispered: *Comply, no matter how much it hurts.* School may not have had my body during this time, but it held my soul captive. Every so often, I'd spend a day or two at school, then come home angry, confused, and hopeless. Enough was finally enough. I formally left school and began to homeschool again. My brother and sister stayed in school; it was mid-February, and they wanted to finish the year.

My mom didn't push me to do schoolwork unless I wanted to, which wasn't very often. It was a beautiful spring, and I spent a lot of time in my backyard. I compiled a book of self-designed spaceship designs and spacescapes. I read, I played, I spent time with my mom.

I made a friend in the local homeschool group. She was a year older than I was, and we had a lot in common, though she'd never been to school. It helped to have a friend who was just as free as I was. According to school's standards we'd outgrown simple play and should have been begging for trips to the mall, the movie theater, the school dance. Our standards were different. We played outside, making bows and arrows, acting out games of wilderness survival. We played at the park, on the playground equipment. We wore cut-off jeans, old T-shirts and mud-stained shoes, and never gave it a thought.

Although this friend has long since moved away, we still keep up through letters and visits. Even though some of my former school friends live only a short drive away, I have never kept up with any of them, perhaps through unspoken agreement that their lives have no room for someone as different as I am. I did see a few friends once or twice, and tried calling some of them, but they were never interested in maintaining a friendship.

I see my life in school and my life away from the system as total opposites. In school I was undeniably unhealthy, both physically and mentally, perhaps even spiritually. Out of school I am happy, self-motivated, productive. I've been away from school for almost five years. I look back on my schooled self and wonder how I ever let myself fall to the extent that I did, how I let myself become hopeless, helpless, stripped of everything that ever identified me as an individual. In some ways it was as inevitable as my compliance with the system that trapped me; in fact, this was a real part of being trapped. If you exhaust a child, constantly feed her the message that she must absorb what she is told to, then spit it back upon command, that philosophy of life permeates everything that she does. She becomes convinced that her desire for something different must be unusual and unacceptable, to say nothing of impossible. I know; I went through it.

Now, I see myself as a totally different person than I was then. I am not hopeless; I know that I have the ability to make decisions and follow through on them. I have a high level of power over what I learn, what I do, who I am. I am most certainly not helpless. Although I rely on the support of my family, and to a lesser extent of a few close friends, I know that the real control in my life is myself. I'm not referring to being able to arbitrarily decide if something is morally right or wrong, or to being able to ignore anything that my parents tell me. I'm talking about the knowledge that it is my determination that allows me to be the person I want to be. Other people can wish that I were any number of things. Only I can make myself those things. I have a strong sense of who I am, what I want to be doing, how I should be living. I'm not spoonfed someone else's philosophy, someone else's list of shalls and shall-nots. I am able to discern for myself what is what in my life. I can be myself, not someone else's image of who I should be.

What does school have to do with any of this, you might ask. It has everything to do with all that I've mentioned. To me, it's obvious that school constantly feeds a person exactly what they don't need to be hearing: you don't matter, you have no control, you can change nothing, you cannot be unique, you must fit in, you must comply no matter what. On the other hand, if you can escape these negative voices, as I have, you can listen to another set of messages entirely: I am important. I can change things. It is my work, my efforts, that allow me to achieve the things I want to. I am myself, not a shades-of-grey photocopy of the expected. I have managed to rise out of the system and all that compliance to its mandates brings with it. I am free. ◆

Resources & Recommendations

Videos of Great American Speeches

Amanda Bergson-Shilcock (PA) writes:

I have written in GWS before about my interest in history. And though the state of Pennsylvania thinks I graduated four years ago, I still view myself as a homeschooler, albeit one whose education now includes college classes. Recently, my love of history and my view of myself collided as the result of a wonderful resource I discovered at the library. It was a video called Great American Speeches, and in some respects it's unusual that it caught my eye. Video is not usually my preferred medium for learning. But while working at the library and painstakingly typing out the names of all of the speeches included on the video, my interest was piqued, and I brought the tape (actually a two-tape set) home.

My father, also interested in history, sat down with me late one night to watch the beginning. I wasn't quite sure what to expect, but I thought it might be a no-frills, no-context-provided type of thing. It wasn't. Clips of speeches (some short, some quite lengthy) are interspersed with stills from the appropriate time period, and the whole thing is narrated by Jody Powell.

This is by no means a comprehensive look at modern American history, nor is it without its biases. But as an introduction to people and times, it's excellent. Beginning in the early 1900s with Teddy Roosevelt and continuing through a 1984 speech by Jesse Jackson, it covers an amazing amount of ground. I couldn't believe how much I learned. It's one thing to listen to a professor talk about T.R. as potentially the most manipulative and dangerous president, and another to watch scenes of his arm-waving speeches and hear of how he would stop, mid-speech, to repeat a gesture that press photographers hadn't snapped the first time. By the same token, it's one thing to read about Father Charles Coughlin and his power over his listening audience, and another to listen to his "Roosevelt or Ruin" speech after seeing a barrage of images documenting his immense public status in the early 1930s. None of the tape segments are especially long, but my sense of the Army-McCarthy hearings has been changed by even the relatively brief footage shown.

Dad and I encouraged other members of the family to watch portions of the tape, and though some were more willing than others it did spark discussion. Malcolm X's Easter speech in Harlem and Robert F. Kennedy's moving, surreal speech in Indianapolis following Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination were standouts, as was Barbara Jordan's admonition to Congress during the Watergate debacle.

I don't often find myself in the position of recommending video resources to others, but in this case I think Great American Speeches offers a wonderful jumping-off point for discussions of American history. It certainly provided me with food for thought.

Free History Materials

We received a press release offering free material from the National Women's History Project (actually, you need to send minimal shipping costs, so it's not quite free). The press release says that the organization "will send homeschooling parents their choice of elementary or middle-school level materials featuring biographies, discussion questions, and student activity ideas. 'Women as Members of Groups' was designed for students in grades 1–4. The 52-page unit introduces Elizabeth Blackwell, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, [and others]. Elizabeth Blackwell ... was the first woman to become a licensed physician in the United States, in 1849. She went on to found the first Women's Medical College, training generations of women to follow her. Elizabeth Cady Stanton raised seven children during the mid-1800s while working steadfastly as a leader in the movement for women's right to vote.

"The 'Jeannette Rankin: First Woman in Congress' unit is intended for grades 8–11. Montana elected Jeannette Rankin to the U.S. Congress in 1916, four years before most states allowed women to vote in federal elections. Her life story is presented in 24 well-illustrated pages, with review and discussion questions and a primary-source document activity."

Send $3 shipping for one unit, $6 for both, to Nat'l Women's History Project, 7738 Bell Rd, Dept P, Windsor CA 95492-8518. To request a catalog or order by credit card, call 707-838-6000.

Free Newsletter for Young Entrepreneurs

We received some sample copies of a free newsletter called *Young Entrepreneur,* published by KidsWay Foundation. It profiles kids who run their own business; one story is about a 16-year-old boy who earns money performing magic shows – he started at birthday parties and now performs at corporate events; another is about a 13-year-old girl who makes and sells her own jewelry; still another is about a 16-year-old girl who began designing business cards for people on her computer and expanded to bookmarks and holiday cards. The stories don't go into great depth, but the newsletter does offer good ideas about starting and running these sorts of enterprises, lists of resources, and an advice column in which young people write in about what has and hasn't worked for them. The newsletter is available from KidsWay Foundation, 1350 NASA Rd One, Suite 101, Houston TX 77058; call toll free 1-888-KidsWay. ◆

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Math for Humans was created by **Mark Wahl**, a math learning specialist for 30 years, and author of ***A Mathematical Mystery Tour***. $29.95, 256 pp., 8/12 x 11. Phone LivnLern Press 360-221-8842

Additions to Directory

Here are the additions and changes that have come in since our last issue. Our complete 1997 Directory was published in GWS #114.

Within each state, families are listed in zip code order, so that readers can find others in their area and travelers can find hosts in a particular region. If you're looking for someone by name rather than by region, skim the last names, which are printed in capital letters.

Our Directory is not a list of all subscribers, but only of those *who ask to be listed*, so that other GWS readers, or other interested people, may get in touch with them. If you would like to be included, please send the entry form or a 3x5 card (one family per card). Please take care to include all the information - last name, full address, and so on. Tell us if you would rather have your phone number and town listed instead of your mailing address (we don't have space to list both).

If a Directory listing is followed by a **(H)**, the family is willing to host GWS travelers who make advance arrangements in writing.

If a name in a GWS story is followed by a state abbreviation in parentheses (e.g. "Jane Goldstein (MA) writes...") that person is in the Directory. If the name is followed by the entire state name (e.g. "Jane Goldstein of Massachusetts writes...") then that person is not in the Directory. We are happy to forward mail to those whose addresses are *not* in the Directory. If you want us to forward the letter without reading it, mark the *outside* of the envelope with writer's name, description and the issue number. If you want us to read the letter and then forward it, please enclose another stamped envelope.

When you send us an address change for a subscription, please remind us if you are in the Directory, so we can change it here, too.

Please remember that we can't control how the Directory is used. If you receive unwanted mail as a result of being listed, just toss it out or recycle it.

CA, North (zips 94000 & up) — Helene ROCK (Mia Tova:87) 1048 Border Rd, Los Altos 94024-4726 ••• Dale & Gary BOLAND (Sylvie:84, Carly:86, Gulliver:91) 1920 Yolo Av, Berkeley 94707 **(H)** ••• Judith JENNA (Danielle:80) 220 D St #8, San Rafael 94901 ••• Lisa & Ron WILLIAMS (Jacob:84, Brian:87) 69 Shady Oaks Dr, Watsonville 95076 **(H)** ••• Katje SABIN-NEWMILLER & Jeff NEWMILLER (Cordell:88, Julia:90, Clayton:93) 2002 Regis Dr, Davis 95616-2536 **(H)** ••• Nancy & David GRAY (Ira:90, Emma:95) 128 First St, Woodland 95695 **(H)**

CA, South (zips to 94000) — Rosemary & Joy ROBB (Angelo Joseph:89) 3023 Segovia Way, Carlsbad 92009 ••• Carin & Stephen KALLY (James:91, Peter:92) 1103 Casitas Vista Rd, Ventura 93001 **(H)**

CO — Lucy & Dave BAUER (Alex:89, Naomi:91, Heidi:93, Bibiana:95) 28311 Shadow Mtn Dr, Conifer 80433 **(H)** ••• Robert & Lisa MACALUSO (Alex:91, Anthony:93) 6284 Ross Rd, Morrison 80465 ••• Timothy & Krista STEWART (Rick:81, Ruth:84, Thomas:87) PO Box 2101, Ridgway 81432 (change) **(H)**

CT — Alisa GRIGGS & William DOMLER (Griggs:83, Timothy:86) PO Box 37, Collinsville 06022-1516 **(H)** ••• Lon & George DUHAIME (Micah:88, Chloe:92, Levi:96) 263 Randall Rd, Lebanon 06249 **(H)**

GA — Robert & Rachel ROSS (Andrew:89, Benjamin:96) 10025 Lake Forest Way, Roswell 30076 ••• Robert & Gail PENDERGRAST (Michael:85, Rachel:88, Julia:90, Joseph:94) 816 Lake Royal Dr, Grovetown 30813

IL — John & Katie FREESE (Terrill:92, Tristan:95) 160 Eastview Rd, Crystal Lake 60014 ••• Robert & Janine MOORE (Bobby:92, Tommy:96) 5710 Bunny Av, McHenry 60050 ••• Matthew & Michelle KRUEGER (Matt:86, Tina:88, Lily:93) 16410 Collins Rd, Woodstock 60098 ••• Becki SCIACCA (Tracy:80) 244 Elmwood Dr, Naperville 60540 **(H)**

ME — Pat WILLETTE & Tim JONES (Alexander:87, Nicholas:90) RR 2 Box 3145, Turner 04282 (change) ••• Glen MITTELHAUSER & Daaby TINGLE (Celeste:92, Pepin:96) RR 1 Box 750, Gouldsboro 04607 **(H)**

MD — Cathleen COONEY & Joe WIEHAGEN (Paul:91, Margaret:94) 3019 Lake Av, Cheverly 20785 ••• Radhika & Sandeep RISHI (Abhishek:91, Karna:96) Rishi's Vaisnava Ctr for Education, 2623 Deer Ridge Dr, Silver Spring 20904 **(H)**

MA — Carol SAKALA & Dan DICK (Leah:89, Jonah:92) 32 Cottage St, Natick 01760-5840 **(H)** ••• Amy DAVIES (Ian:91) 41 Traincroft St, Medford 02155 **(H)** ••• Elizabeth & Andrew MAHON (Jake:93, Lance:95) 16 Spring St, Arlington 02174 **(H)**

MI — Sandra LINDO (Nya:92, Jackson:93, Miles:96) 722 Soule Blvd, Ann Arbor 48403 **(H)**

MN — Mark & Judy HICKEY (Zachary:86, Nathan:88, Matthew:92, Benjamin & Noah:94) 1807 Northern Viola Ln NE, Rochester 55906 ••• Mike & Jennifer RUPPRECHT (Johanna:87) RR 2 Box 81, Lewiston 55952 **(H)**

MO — Dennis & Christina CONNELL (Ash:81, Steve:84) Rt 5 Box 278A, Carthage 64836 **(H)**

NH — Dan & Susie FERGUS (George:91, Jacob:94) 68 Burke Rd, Peterborough 03458-2207 **(H)**

NJ — Daniel & Maria BACHMAN (Kaila:88, Amy:91, Marielle:92) 421 Salem Av, Spring Lake 07762 ••• Shelly & Forrest KINZLI (Nathanael:81, Micaella:86) 57 Hoagland Rd, Blairstown 07825 (change)

NM — Tina & Brad MARTIN (Kami:81, Kacie:89) HC 75 Box 1705, Chaparral 88021

NY — Dave & Eva CHEN, 545 1st Av #9A, New York 10016 ••• Lisa & Itzik YAKOVI (Rafael:89, Maya:92, Talia:95) 90 Knights Bridge Rd Apt 1K, Great Neck 11021 ••• Melike & Yavuz ERKAN (Leyla:93, Amber:94) 24 Hunters Pt, Pittsford 14534 **(H)**

PA — Jan & Mark THOMAS (Wendy:89) 327 Bailey Rd, Rosemont 19010 ••• Louis MARKS & Gina SYLVESTER-MARKS (Roper:89, Kaya:93, Niko:94) 2140 West Chester Rd, Coatesville 19320 **(H)**

TN — Michael & Jennifer LIVELY (Laura:89,

Emily/92, Jonathan/94, Joshua/96) Tennessee Homeschooling Families, 1356 Cove Ln, Oliver Spgs 37840

TX — LaVonne & Jeff PARKER (Kate/92, Sara/93) 10603 Haselwood Ln, Dallas 75238 (change) **(H)**

VA — Michael & Ellen NEAL (Kenny/83, Daniel/85, Jacob/88) 422 Perkins Hollow Ln, Faber 22938 ••• Mark & Tammy MALTBY (Joey/83, Julian/85, Joshua/90, Jane/95) Rt 1 Box 300-B, Fishersville 22939 (change) ••• Kent & Tonya DAVIS (Katharine/94) 206 Murray St, Beckley 25801

Canada —

BC — Jan HUNT (Jason/81) 9525 Doyle Rd, Black Creek V9J 1E7 (change)

ON — Peter & Leah FREEDMAN (Josh/84, Julia/87) 49 Joshua Ct, Thornhill L4J 8B6

QB — Vanessa WATERS (Amelia/91) 3957 Saint-Antoine West, Montreal H4C 1B7 **(H)**

Other Locations — Roger & Roberta ELLIOTT (Troy/86, Erin/90) CMR 438 Box 2256, APO AE 09111 (**Germany**) ••• Christina & Peter DeSCHEPPER (Cole/92, Michelle/95) Rue du Manedje 16, 6960 Fays **Belgium (H)** ••• Nataly KENDZERSKI (Jane/90) 23 Moorhouse Rd, London W2 5DH **England** ••• Paula & Tony PANFIGLIONI (Jennifer & Paul/88) 21 Stockwood Rise, Camberley, Surrey GU152EA **England** ••• Sara-Rivka & Moshe ERNSTOFF (Kobi/86, Martha/88, Channi/91) Tekoa, D.N. Tzafon, Yehuda **Israel** 90908 (change)

Groups to Add to the Directory of Organizations (the complete list was published in GWS #114):

MD — Educating Our Own, 686 Geneva Dr, Westminster 21157; 410-857- 0168

MA — Groton-Dunstable Home Educators, c/o Leslie McLeod-Warrick, 663 Townsend Rd, Groton 01450; 508-448-0929

Address Changes:

CA — Homeschooling Cooperative of Sacramento, 15 Moses Ct, Sacramento 95823-6368

CO — Colorado Home Educators' Assoc, 3043 S Laredo Cir, Aurora 80013; 303-441-9938; email chea@tms-co.com

MA — Cape Ann Homeschoolers, 108R Main St, Rockport 01966; 508-546-7125

PA — Diversity United in Homeschooling, 215-321-4813 (new phone #)

TN — Tennessee Homeschooling Families, 1356 Cove Ln, Oliver Springs TN 37840

WA — Clark County Home Educators, PO Box 5941, Vancouver 98668

Additions to the Lists of Resources that were published in GWS #115:

Certified Teachers:

NH — Sally Ember, 284 Water St, Keene 03431

WV & OH — Linda Campbell, PO Box 4152, Star City WV 26504; WV 304-983-1200; OH 614-470-0572

Lawyers:

CT — George J. Duhaime, 263 Randall Rd, Lebanon 06249; 860-889-9775

ID — Michael Cressler, 414 S Jefferson, Moscow 83843; 208-883-1505

Psychologists:

FL — Dr. Kimberly Kiddoo, 2506 Ponce de Leon Blvd, Coral Gables 33134; 305-442-8500

MA — Neal Katz, 3 Central Av, Newton 02160-1706; 617-332-7262

Resource People:

Computers: Theo Sherman, 2555 Collins Av #2303, Miami Beach 33140; 305-538-7162

Single Parents: Sally Sherman, address above

Grown-Up Homeschoolers:

Patrick Meehan, 1520 Briercliff Dr, Orlando FL 32806 (Software Architect, Nintendo; GWS #99)

Pen-Pals

Children wanting pen-pals should write to those listed. Pleae try to write to someone on the list before listing yourself, and remember to put your address on your letter. To be listed, send name, age, address, and 1-3 words on interests. ••• Elena HALLEY (6) 6 Umbagog Dr, Worcester MA 01604; reading, gymnastics, piccolo ••• Margaret EWING (11) 3966 Elmwood Rd, Cleveland Hts OH 44121; skating, dogs, gymnastics ••• Maggie HICKS (7) 901 Lazy Ln, Bryan TX 77802; rollerblading, science, drawing ••• Sarah KEZMAN (14) 13930 Big Yankee Ln, Centreville VA 20121-2676; writing, theatre, art ••• Brian FRICKEL (13) 2871 Buckingham Pl, Cambria CA 93428; rollerblading, sports, Star Wars ••• Aaron STEMPEL (10) 23509 Slide Rd, Boyds MD 20841; Star Wars, baseball, reading

Writing to GWS

Please: (1) Put separate items of business (book orders, directory entries, letters to GWS, etc.) on separate pieces of paper. This helps us get them to the right people more quickly. (2) Put your name and address at the top of each letter. (3) If you're writing to a specific person, write "GWS" or "Holt Associates" on the envelope in addition to the individual's name.

How to write letters for publication in GWS:

1. Handwrite, type, or dictate your thoughts and send them in on paper, on a cassette tape, or on a 3.5" disc that can be read by a Macintosh (send the hard copy too).

2. There is no #2! We have no formal submission procedures, so rule #1 is all you need. Do tell us whether it's OK to use your name with the story (it's fine to be anonymous instead) and do bear in mind that we edit letters for space and clarity and that we often have much more great stuff than room to print it in a given issue, so it can take a while before something gets in.

The best way to get a sense of what kind of writing gets published in GWS is to look through a few issues. In general, we prefer writing that is in the first- or third-person ("I did this" or "She did that") rather than in the instructional or prescriptive second-person ("You should do this..."). We like to hear about what people did or tried, what did or didn't work, what they've observed or concluded or wondered as a result. GWS stories focus on how children learn, particularly how they learn outside of school settings, and how adults learn, particularly how they tried something new, figured something out, or made their way without school credentials. We are always interested in stories about how homeschoolers meet and deal with common issues – negotiating with a school district, pursuing a particular interest, learning to trust oneself – to name just a few.

We're always interested in responses to writing that has been published in the past, and GWS is often an ongoing conversation among its readers. Because there isn't much time between the day you get an issue of the magazine and the day the next issue goes to press, responses can't always be run right away, but we do try.

We are always interested in good-quality (i.e. sharp, clear, with good contrast) photos to accompany stories. We prefer photos that show a young person or family doing what's being described in the story to portrait photos that simply show the person posing. Either color or black and white prints work for us.

Most of the time, readers don't need a special invitation to write to GWS; just follow rule #1, above. When we are planning to have a section of an issue focus on a specific topic or question, we write or call people ahead of time inviting them to write on that topic. These are readers whom we suspect (based on previous correspondence) have experience with the subject or something to say on the topic. The more we hear from you, the more likely we are to know what you might be able to write about and thus the more likely we are to think of you when a particular topic comes up. For our regular Focus section, we ask kids who have written in the past, kids who have said they would like to write, and – mostly – kids chosen at random from the Directory and pen-pal listings. If you want to be asked to write for an upcoming Focus, drop us a card, or, better yet, write a GWS story about something else (your thoughts or experiences, your response to something in a previous issue).

We love hearing from readers whether or not we are able to publish the story, as all letters give us valuable information and food for thought.

ENTRY FORM FOR DIRECTORY

Use this form to send us a new entry or a substantial address change to be run in the next available issue of GWS.

Adults (first *and* last names):

Organization (only if address is same as family):

Children (names/birthyears):

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Full address (Street, City, State, Zip):

Are you willing to host traveling GWS readers who make advance arrangements in writing? Yes ___ No ___

Are you in the 1997 Directory (GWS #114)? Yes ___ No ___

Or in the additions in a subsequent issue? Yes ___ No ___

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Rates for **Canadian** subscribers: $29/yr. **Outside of North America**: $40/yr airmail, $29/yr surface mail (allow 2-3 months). Subscribers in U.S. territories pay U.S. rates.

Foreign payments must be either money orders in US funds or checks drawn on US banks. We can't afford to accept personal checks from Canadian accounts, even if they have "US funds" written on them. We suggest that foreign subscribers use MasterCard or Visa if possible.

Address Changes: If you're moving, let us know your new address as soon as possible. Please enclose a recent label (or copy of one). Issues missed because of a change of address (that we weren't notified about) may be replaced for $3 each. The post office destroys your missed issues and charges us a notification fee, so we can't afford to replace them without charge.

Renewals. At the bottom of the next page is a form you can use to renew your subscription. Please help us by renewing early.

How can you tell when your subscription expires? Look at this sample label:

A12345 123456 08/01/97
JIM AND MARY SMITH
16 MAIN ST
PLAINVILLE NY 01111

The number that is underlined in the example tells the date of the final issue for the subscription. The Smiths' sub expires with our 8/1/97 issue (#118, the next issue, which will say Sept./Oct. 1997 on the cover). But if we were to receive their renewal before the end of the previous month (7/31), they would qualify for the free bonus issue.

Reward for bringing in new subscribers. If you convince someone to become a new subscriber - to take out a subscription at $25 a year - you will receive a $5 credit which you can apply to any John Holt's Book and Music Store order or to your own subscription renewal.

Declassified Ads

Rates: 70c/word, $1/word boldface. Please tell these folks you saw the ad in GWS.

Mortensen Math can change your child's attitude about math! Call today for FREE CATALOG 1-800-338-9939. Special SAVINGS for GWS readers. Internet email to: MATH4UZC@aol.com

Love Kids & Books? Become a consultant with **Usborne Books at Home!** Home parties, book fairs, & more. 800+ educational, lavishly illustrated children's books – the BEST on the market! Free information packet: 800-705-7137.

Philosophies of life (Buddhism, for example), ethics, travel skills – teen unschoolers discuss these topics, as well as fine and performing arts, with published poet whose hobby is correspondence. Write: Ronald A. Richardson, 4003 50th Av SW, Seattle WA 98116.

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Parenting Counselor - see display p. 20.

The Free School now has an alternative education residency program for interns or anyone interested in experiencing the school and/or community. Cost depends on individual circumstances. Contact Chris Mercogliano, 8 Elm St, Albany, NY 12202. 518-434-3072.

Used books for Homeschoolers, especially **Landmarks**. Send long SASE for list to DC Wright, PO Box 4644, Vancouver, WA 98662.

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THE NATURAL CHILD PROJECT IS ON THE INTERNET! Our multiple-award-winning web site has articles on empathic parenting, homeschooling, and child advocacy, by Jan Hunt, M.Sc., a parenting advice column, personal stories, and a guest column. Visit us at **www.naturalchild.com**

OUT OF PRINT BOOKS LOCATED. Free search. AVONLEA BOOKS, POB 74HS, White Plains, NY 10602. 800-423-0622. Fax 914-761-3119. avonlea@bushkin.com

Families wanted. Co-neighboring homeschooling community planned on or around a good priced rural development of 3 and 4 bedroom houses in Central PA (south of Bethlehem). Aim - support, shared resources, easy socialization without hours of driving. Contact Jackieab@hotmail.com or phone 610-222-9697.

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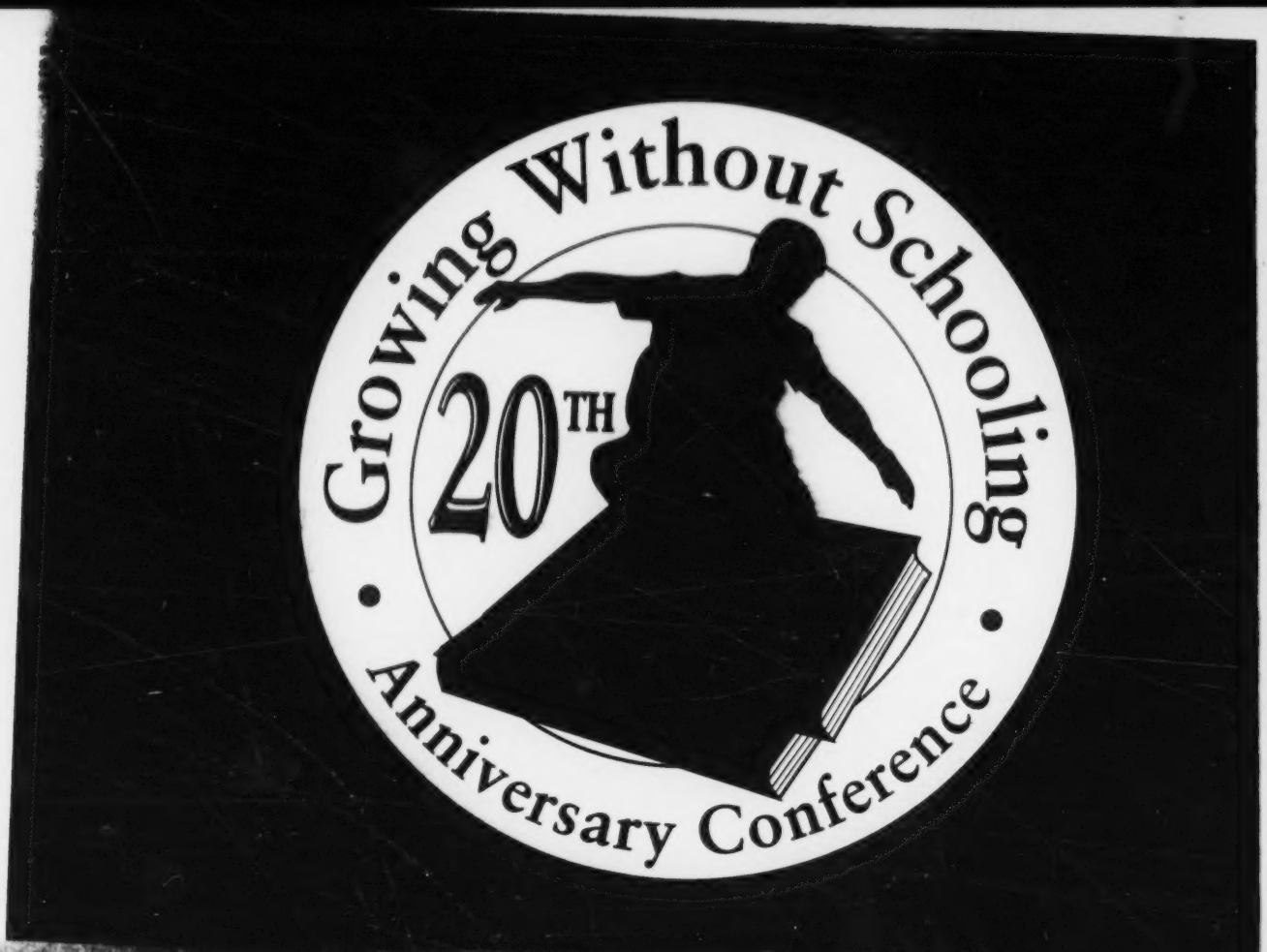

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U.S. $6 Issue 118 Sept./Oct. '97

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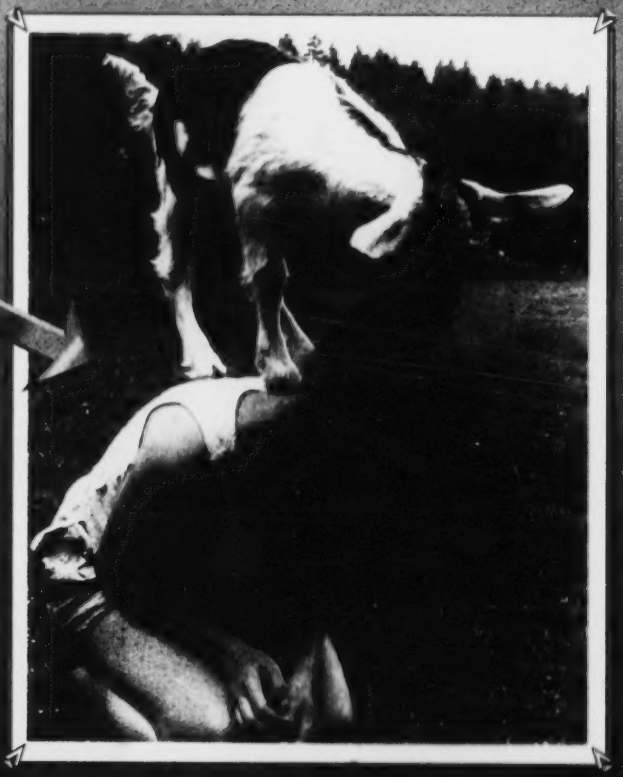

Grown Homeschoolers Reflect on Their School-Free Lives

PLUS:
Thoughts From Pioneering Parents, Activists, and Educational Innovators

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Issue #118
Sept. - Oct. '97

GWS

Founded in 1977
By John Holt

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Growing Without Schooling #118, Vol. 20, No. 2. ISSN #1073-3097. Published by Holt Associates, 2269 Mass. Ave., Cambridge MA 02140. $25 yr. Date of issue: Sept.-Oct. 1997. Second-class postage paid at Boston, MA and at additional mailing offices.
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: GWS, 2269 Mass. Ave, Cambridge, MA 02140
ADVERTISERS: Space reservation deadlines are the 1st of odd-numbered months. Copy deadlines are the 15th. For rates and other info, write Barb Lundgren, 9013 Hickory Hill, Colleyville, TX 76034; call 817-416-6123.

From the Editor

What do you see when you picture freedom?

A horse bursting out of the corral, galloping toward the horizon? A child leaping down the steps of the school building for the last time, never again forced to return? A teenager with an open expanse of daytime stretching ahead of her as she wakes up each morning?

Freedom is, indeed, about the absence of constraint or obstacle or force. But even more vividly than these images of unfettered abandon, here's what I see when I think of freedom:

A 17-year-old planning a five-month cycling trip across the United States, researching and training for it months in advance, arranging an apprenticeship at a bicycle shop to learn the maintenance she'll need on the road.

A 16-year-old getting up early on a Saturday morning to chop vegetables for the meals he and other volunteers will serve to the hungry people in his town.

Two 9-year-olds building elaborate make-believe towns day after day.

A 12-year-old learning the scientific terms that will help him follow what his community's monthly astronomy group is talking about.

A 13-year-old revising a poem yet another time because although it feels almost right, she can still see more work to do.

In other words, when I think of freedom, I think of volition, dedication, and workmanship, and the particular joy that they produce. I think of these lines by George Dennison, author of *The Lives of Children*:

> The real touchstone of freedom, you know, is not joyous people romping in the grass, but quality, first-rate work. ... You don't reach this by regimenting people, or by having a *lifestyle* of freedom – which tends to be all style and no life – but by doing things, especially the things you can do with a whole heart.

Twenty years ago, John Holt published the first issue of *Growing Without Schooling*, and the 117 issues that have followed have, in some sense, been a meditation on the three words of the name. First there is *schooling*, and much of Holt's work was an effort to see that process clearly and to describe it accurately, so that when we turn to the "without" part – to the notion of living and raising children without schooling – we're able to sort out what we're leaving behind and what we can keep. Does "without schooling" mean without teachers, without textbooks, without schedules, without groups, without grades, without tests? Over the years, families writing in our pages have reflected on their own choices and examined what they want to reject and what they want to reclaim. Some say, "Yes, 'without schooling' means without everything on that list and without a lot of other things, too." Others say, "Well, I want some, but not all." Still others say, "I want them, but not in school's sense of the word" – which has launched many a fascinating discussion.

Ultimately, however, the most important and most

interesting word of the three is *growing*. Once you've decided what you'll do without, the question of how to live fully and well and how to help children grow up fully and well still remains. This question, in its myriad forms, occupies the lion's share of our pages. Not going to school, terrifying and exhilarating a decision though it may be, turns out to be only the first step. As James Herndon writes in his funny and profound book *How to Survive in Your Native Land*, "The real curriculum of our classroom ought to have been, 'What shall we do in here?'" In other words, what is worth doing? What matters to you? What can you do with a whole heart?

Answering that question can occupy the better part of one's growing up years (and much longer, for many of us). But the most exciting thing about freedom, to me, is that it makes the answering a priority and a real possibility. In working to support freedom in education, we're advocating *freedom from*, because we have to, because for many who are stuck in coercive and stultifying situations, that part absolutely must come first. But we're really working for *freedom to* – to prepare intensively for that bike trip, to build that make-believe town all day long, to watch the insects on the grass until you know them, or whatever it might take on that day or week or year to go right to the heart of what captures your attention and brings meaning into your life.

This past April I spoke at an event sponsored by the Pathfinder Learning Center, and speaking with me was a psychologist named Eduardo Bustamante. In his talk he described what he terms "*make sure* parenting" – the attitude in which parents believe it's their job to make sure the child gets up in the morning, make sure he brushes his teeth, make sure he gets to the schoolbus on time, and on and on into the evening. As Eduardo went through this litany, the parents in the audience laughed with such recognition that it was obvious he had hit a nerve. He went on to describe what happens when we believe we have to make sure things happen – all those tricks, those efforts, that checking and reminding and insisting.

As I listened, it seemed to me that all of compulsory schooling can be thought of as "make sure education." We need to make sure children learn this and do that, so we devise all kinds of things that we believe *will* make sure. Most don't work, of course. You can put three years of Science in the high school curriculum because you want to make sure students learn it, but many still won't.

What's the alternative? It seems to me that the alternative to "make sure" is "make possible," and this is what I think characterizes homeschooling at its best. You can't mandate that people will grow or flourish, but you can remove obstacles, and offer opportunities, that will help make certain kinds of growth and development possible. That things feel possible seems an essential component of freedom. Otherwise, what good is it to be free, theoretically, to do this or that? Thus, another central part of GWS's ongoing conversation is about how to make things possible for young people (and adults). What obstacles need to be removed, and what opportunities and resources and support offered, to make possible the quality, first-rate work, done with a whole heart, that Dennison describes?

I can't wrap this up without saying something more about support, which may be the least understood aspect of the type of homeschooling GWS describes. In talking with people, I find that many see a spectrum of adult behavior, at one end of which is compulsion and coercion – requiring certain types of compliance and expecting certain outcomes – and at the other end is something like leaving kids entirely alone. But this is a false dichotomy. If I had to come up with one word to describe the alternative to both coercion *and* leaving kids alone, I'd say "support."

If John Holt did sometimes speak of leaving kids alone, he meant it in the sense of not pressuring, not interfering *when interference was not wanted*, not constantly examining and checking and "pulling the flowers up to see if they're growing." This is of course important and so far from the usual educational approach that it demanded a lot of explanation and discussion, and still does. But nothing grows without nourishment and support, least of all people, whose needs are seldom as obvious and straightforward as flowers'. Young people don't want to be bothered and pressured, but in my experience they certainly are hungry for serious attention and thoughtful support. That too is consonant with rather than opposed to freedom.

Twenty years ago I was reading Holt's *Instead of Education* and wondering if I'd ever meet anyone else who agreed with his position. Not long afterward I opened the mailbox to see my first letter from John Holt and an early issue of his fledgling newsletter. It was beyond my imagination at that time that I might one day be writing letters from that same address and editing that same newsletter, but the thrill of connecting with a kindred spirit never dimmed. A few years later I met my first real live homeschooling family, who embodied everything I had spent years reading and thinking about, and the feeling of kinship and possibility blazed brighter still. Each family I subsequently came to know gave me a further glimpse of what freedom made possible. Now I sit ready to go to press with pages of powerful and moving testimonials from grown homeschoolers and their courageous and pioneering parents, and I think of how lucky I am to have GWS at the center of the work I am able to do with a whole heart. Happy anniversary to all GWS readers, writers, and friends!

– Susannah Sheffer

A note on the material in this issue:
We suspend our usual sections to offer reflections from grown homeschoolers, pioneering parents, activists in the homeschooling movement, other educators whom we have interviewed over the years, and current homeschooling parents and kids. The varied contributions present both distinct voices and common themes, and we're pleased that so many people could be part of this special issue. Our usual features will return in issue #119, and we'll also bring you a report on our anniversary conference. If this is your first issue of GWS, welcome, and we hope you'll be with us for future issues.

"But How Do They Turn Out?"
Grown Homeschoolers Reflect on Their School-Free Lives

Continuing Adventures

Emily Ostberg's letters from her year-long apprenticeship working with medicinal plants in Belize were published in GWS four years ago. Now she writes:

I have been a homeschooler all my life and have remained one in spirit through my first two years of college. My homeschooling mentality, which crystallized some time during my teenage years, has become such an integral part of me that I can never leave it behind. I am aware that I learn constantly: from people, activities, and books. I have never viewed learning as something that happens only during the limited hours of formal instruction. I do my academic work in my own way and at my own speed in college just as I did at home. Unlike many of my peers, I strive to understand and retain the material we study and try very hard not to get sucked into the unhealthy pattern of cramming for tests and then forgetting everything.

Homeschooling has given me a healthy craving for libraries and I find myself rushing to get a library card soon after I move into a new town. It has given me an appreciation both for my ability to find information and learn what I want to know and for people who are good teachers and can help me learn something in a stimulating and useful manner. For example, I truly enjoy sitting back and listening to lectures from my favorite anthropology professor who can summarize the huge amount that he knows in an entertaining manner and can comment constructively on my written work.

I note the behavior and struggles of children I care for as they cope with the daily grind of school and I question my friends at college about their own educational experiences and opinions. Not many of them seem terribly interested in exploring their own educations but most of them have decided opinions about mine. They are eager to blame all of my quirks on my strange education and invariably tell me stories about other "strange" homeschoolers they have met. I get asked all the same questions, now in the past tense instead of the present: "Did you have any friends?" "How about sports/dating/science/social skills?"

Having always been homeschooled and therefore always considered weird, I am rarely bothered by the (usually) misguided impressions of my friends. For one thing, homeschooling, although obviously a huge part of who I am, is not the only important factor which shaped my life in non-mainstream ways. Among other things, not having watched TV and coming from a tiny town gave me a fundamentally different background from most other Americans.

Homeschooling has made possible for me a huge number of experiences both big and small which I would never have had otherwise. I was able to spend a year volunteering in Belize when I was 17, take university extension courses while still in high school, study outside on the grass, etc. It made my transition to college easy because I was already self-motivated to study and it has supported my desire to learn even in the midst of stupid assignments and occasional restrictions on classes. It has certainly never impaired my social skills! Currently, homeschooling is helping me make my way to a greater knowledge of herbal medicine (which I plan to study formally after college). Although my friends think I'm crazy for saying so, I sometimes refer to my life as "The Continuing Adventures of a Homeschooler."

Growing Up in the Real World

Laura Wiggett (formerly Laura Gelner) was interviewed for GWS several years ago about her experience of college admissions and of the transition from homeschooling to college. Now she writes:

One of the things I've always found humorous about other people's reactions to homeschoolers is their deep-seated belief that homeschoolers are so completely sheltered. "Oh, how are you going to handle being in the real world?" I was asked over and over again as a college freshman. This was the big thing as a freshman. We were told we were in the real world now, without anyone standing over us making sure we did our homework, cleaned our rooms, washed behind our ears, etc. The funny thing was, college was the *least* real world I had been in in over 9 years. Where were the little kids? Where were the adults (as peers, not just as security guards and lecturers)? As a homeschooler, I had *been* in the real world growing up, and college was just a temporary suspension of this.

As we progressed through college and entered our

senior year, friends started to panic about having to go out into the real world for real now (having by then finally realized that college was in fact still a somewhat sheltered and herded experience). I was feeling only relief – relief that I could finally pick up where I had left off four years ago, and that I would again be able to interact with children, seniors, teenagers, and others missing from a college campus. College had its good points, but there was just so much missing.

Almost everyone else I knew was unprepared for life after college. For 16 years they had been told what they'd be doing, what classes they'd be taking, what to learn, how to learn it, nine months out of every year. To be sure, they'd had choices of classes, from a selected list, and some freedom about exactly how and when they'd get their assignments done. But they'd never had complete control. Now they didn't know what they wanted to do. That had never been an option for them.

For me, growing up as a homeschooler, everything I did was by my choice. Oh, my Mom made sure we had some math, did some reading of the classics, wrote some papers. But which math books to use, which authors to read, what other topics to study, what schedule we were on (spring was too busy with our homeschoolers sports team to do schoolwork, so I worked through the summer when there was more time), were our choice. I feel this strengthened my ability to think about and decide what I want to do and figure out how to do it, and now, at 24, I still feel this is a difference between me and others I know. I'm not saying I have all the answers, but I know what direction I'm trying to head in.

I got a B.A. in physics from The Colorado College two years ago, decided physics wasn't what I wanted to do with my life, and am currently working as a Software Analyst (something I did want to do). When my husband, Brian, and I have children in the future, we will definitely homeschool them. (Brian was not homeschooled, but he is one of the biggest proponents of homeschooling I know, next to his father, a public high school teacher.)

A Connection, Not a Shield

Nathan Williamson's early GWS contributions explored learning through teaching others, the homeschoolers' writing group he belonged to, and his opportunity to learn electronics from an adult neighbor. Now he writes:

Having homeschooled until age 16, then spent two years at a private high school in Vermont, one year mostly in South America, and one year at Macalester College in Minnesota (where it seems that everyone was a valedictorian in high school), I have experienced many different kinds of education. After these four years away from home, and for the first time, I am able to look back at my homeschooling days with some amount of perspective.

I began homeschooling after failing kindergarten. I would have been placed in special education classes, and I dread to think what would have happened if I had stayed in school. Since I tested above average throughout my later homeschooling years, it just goes to show that everyone learns at a different speed.

Perhaps I, like many others, agree that homeschooling made me creatively independent. Certainly I find myself the only one speaking to my professors after class and disagreeing with them on a first-name basis during class. And it is no accident that I have already completed two independent courses at college (I traveled to the Dominican Republic to do research for one). Indeed, I learn best when I am free to worm my way through the stacks at the library, searching for another book to complete my already diffuse bibliography. This was a skill I honed while homeschooling; it is the art of making learning interesting.

It seems to me that homeschooling at its best is not isolationist. Rather, it can be a connection to the outside world that is real, diverse, and invigorating. It is a breath of fresh air. Homeschooling functions best when it is not a shield, but an elastic boundary, through which creativity can bulge in undreamt ways. Empowering your daughters and sons through nonschooling is fantastic. For example, I learned advanced electronic theory when I became a Ham Radio fanatic at age 14. When I was designing and building my own equipment, I locked myself in our cool concrete basement voluntarily, reviewing textbooks with fervor and excitement. I was allowed the opportunity to make math real. Meanwhile, many of my peers, who were attending public schools, were bemoaning tediousness and impracticality, which they saw embodied in the blurred equations on the chalk board, and the requirement to attend school in general. My hobby allowed me to become friends with people all over the world via radio contact, and with people in the local club. Had I taken advantage of it, the organization would have even given me a scholarship to help pay for college. Thus, while being allowed to stay at home, I was also able to leave the home. I met people through that hobby whom I would not have met if I had attended a normal school.

My mother had a lot to do with Ham Radio. I could not have learned much about electronics had my mother not taught me algebra. It was a process that I suffered through. In fact, at the time, I would have rather slammed my finger in a door than memorize anything (even the spelling of my middle name, which I finally got around to when I was 11).

In my experience, homeschooling can be a double-edged sword for families. On one side is love of one's children; on the other, a tendency to overpower, to be too close. The real challenge is to provide children with good values and real nurturing and yet have the courage to allow for their necessary independence. Being together all day is hard on both child and adult. As I was particularly rebellious, I am rather sensitive to this. For me, there came a time to stop homeschooling. I found that time, and left to attend a boarding school for two years. I had learned a great deal about myself and the things I was interested in during my homeschooling, but later on I had a need to be around more people my age more of the time. There was another reason I wanted to leave home, too: in my later teen years, my relationship with my mother had become so stressed from years of being together all the time that it

would have been healthier for both of us if I had found a way to be away from home for most of the day, whether by going to school or by getting involved in a job, an internship, or some other activity I could do on my own. As it turned out, I waited too long to leave home, and when I did leave, I felt the need to go to boarding school a thousand miles away. So, in hindsight, I think that my homeschooling needed to have more to do with the rest of the world. Isolation is a dangerous thing, because it can lead to paranoia. Perhaps community schooling would be a healthier term. In any case, though school is not the only option for a teenager who feels as I did, it was the option that fit me well at the time. (Another option that I think could work well for some older teenagers would be to take courses at local colleges.)

Homeschooling is a great tool, a tremendous advantage and opportunity. To all those who are homeschooling, I would say: feed your ambition as if it is a hungry feline. Go out, meet people, get internships, and flirt with the rest of the world. You can be sure that you have the other side of the balance: self-worth, and love from your parents.

An Insatiable Listmaker

Abigail McNulty-Czapsky recently wrote to GWS about the experience of teaching a pottery class, and she explored the question of what it's like for homeschoolers to act as teachers. Now she writes:

Among the things that I've inherited from my mother are intellectual insatiability and listmaking, the latter acting as a good running record of the former. My earliest homeschooling memory is of myself at about 7 years old, sitting with my mother at the kitchen table, compiling a list of things I thought I ought to learn in the coming year. I don't remember everything I put on that list, but it included such goals as: learn names of all wild plants, animals, and birds; learn how to speak all languages; learn history of world; learn how to build magnetically powered car (needed for investigation of latter subjects!).

What I'm trying to express about this list is that all the plans recorded in it were my own ideas and they were extremely ambitious ideas. I never completed all the goals I set for myself on that list or on innumerable subsequent lists, but I accumulated a good overall education in my attempts, with my natural curiosity intact. Children who go to school aren't treated as though they own their own time, and so they are less likely to make lists of the things they are curious about in expectation of being allowed to explore such subjects freely.

Now, at 20, my list includes such things as taking writing and Latin classes at Columbia University this fall. I'll spend part of my time at the university in New York City and part of the time at my family's farm in upstate New York so that I can continue riding dressage and doing the other activities that I have been involved in here.

Sticking to Her Own Values

Mae Shell wrote to GWS frequently throughout her teenage years about such topics as learning a difficult subject, creating useful schedules, and, most recently, her decision not to go to college. Now she writes:

As a life-long unschooler, I often wonder what my life would have been like if my parents had chosen to send me to school. I would undoubtedly be quite a different person. Having been free to go about whatever interests me since as long as I can remember, it is hard to imagine what it would have been like to live any other kind of life. I have grown up hearing about the issues that non-homeschoolers raise regarding this choice in education, and I am at a point now where I can see that 20 years ago homeschooling, as an educational alternative, was in many ways an experiment; a group of people began to see that compulsory education was not working and decided to try something else. Now, 20 years later, the results are in – and I am one of them! Not only has homeschooling been proven successful, but I believe that someday it will ultimately change the structure of society.

Recently, *USA Weekend* did a special issue on "Teens and Freedom," which was a compilation of surveys and views from teens all over the U.S. After reading it, I came away with a strange realization: while the surveys may have been accurate representations of issues facing the majority of U.S. teens, the statistics had nothing at all to do with

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Mae with a book at 21 months ...

... and Mae, working at the library, at 19

me, or the experience I have had in life. My values, ideals, outlook, and relationships with people seem to be so different from what these teens talked about. Their concerns were about school uniforms, peer pressure, drugs, discipline problems, cliques, and numerous other things that, as a homeschooler, I have never experienced. For a moment, I felt alone – as if only I have experienced something different in life from every other teenager in America. But I know that is not true – thousands of young adults in the U.S. have grown up as I have; free from the mindsets of compulsory education. And because of this, we face an unusual challenge – with a different set of values and concerns than the majority of our peers, we often find ourselves alone, frustrated in our attempts at friendship and deeper relationships with people of the mainstream mind-set; searching our souls for what the future holds for us; trying to explain ourselves to those who seem unable to understand.

I feel very separated from my schooled peers because of seemingly insurmountable differences in our values. I have many friends, but they are all significantly younger or older than me. I often feel lonely, and long for friends my own age who are going through the same experiences as I am. However, this is the very reason that I have so few friends in my age group; most of my peers are not facing the same challenges. Because they have had such different lives than me, they have a different set of values.

One thing that sets me apart from my peers is my belief in the importance of family. My experience is that most young adults seem incredulous that one would want to spend time with one's family. To them, finding a sense of self seems to involve separating from their families completely, and facing the world alone, on their own terms. Certainly, in the past few years, I have sought to find my sense of self as an adult. I have made friends, and found a place in the community, through my own initiative. But I did so with the support of my family. I am my own person, yet my family is also a part of me as well. All teens, schooled or not, may feel a need to rebel against something, in order to become autonomous. From what I have seen, it appears that young adults who have been schooled all their lives must rebel violently against the authorities which have dictated their lives for so long. In order to find themselves, they break away from all authority – including the ultimate authority; their parents. As a teenager, I did experience a feeling of wanting to pull away from my family, but at the same time I needed their reassurance more than ever that I could *come back* when I needed to. Because my parents closed no doors, but continued to support me and to trust my needs, I was able to find a place in the community, yet keep the ties to my family intact at the same time. Neither one of these important needs - the journey towards autonomy or the guidance and support from my family - were compromised.

When I was 18, I faced a decision that at the time seemed tremendous: should I go to college or not? The traditional thing to do when one turns 18 is to attend college. I was unsure what the future would hold for me if I did not take this path, which seemed expected of me by many adults in my life. The choice of college held for me the eventual goal of someday a Masters of Library Science so that I could have a career as a librarian. But what I really wanted to do was continue pursuing my interests and passions, which at the time were working part time in the local library, playing around on computers, and writing poetry. After much soul-searching, I chose not to go to college. Deeming myself a student of life whose motto was "The next best thing to knowing the answer is knowing where to find it," I went merrily on my way. Now, two years later, I have learned to write web pages, still work at the library, recently became a trustee at another local library, continue to write poetry, and (except for the lack of like-minded peers in my social group) couldn't be happier. I am still living at home, and I love it – the connection I have always had with my family did not end suddenly when I turned 18; I love having my parents to talk to, and watching my sisters grow up. Whatever the future holds, I know that my family will continue to be an integral part of it.

So, what does the future hold for us, the young adults who are the outcome of the first generation in the home-

schooling movement? I believe that our unique outlook and values will add a needed dose of creativity and sanity to our often chaotic society. For the most part, we know what we want and how to get there, even if our goals are not as clear-cut as wanting a career in library science or becoming the CEO of a large corporation. The mainstream world often doesn't know what to make of us, and we sometimes don't know what to make of it, but someday, somehow, just by living our lives, we will help bring the two halves of this equation together. I hope that eventually enough people will grow up as we have to assure that homeschoolers will never feel alone – that, in fact, our experience in life will be the norm, not the exception. We are the beginning of a better tomorrow, and just the realization of that is enough reason for celebration. Watch out world – here we come!

Family Closeness is the Best Gift

This is Sara Shell's first contribution to GWS, though she has often spoken about her homeschooling experiences to groups in conjunction with her mother's Resource Center for Homeschooling in Vermont.

I am a lifelong homeschooler and I have just finished my first year in the Tisch School of the Arts dance department at New York University. One of the many differences I've noticed between me and most of my friends here is our relationships with our families. I am very close to my parents and sisters in a way that I'm discovering is very unusual. I've known for a long time that many teenagers don't get along with their parents very well. Even when I was younger, I remember that the other girls at my dance studio would have long sessions of bemoaning how their parents were so "out of it." I never had anything to contribute to the barrage of complaints. Then when I arrived at college, I seemed to be the only one who missed my family. Other students talked about how glad they were to finally be free of their parents, away from their siblings. Oh yes, they missed their friends like crazy, but families? Those, they had been glad to leave.

At times, my attachment to my family has seemed like a bit of a handicap. I've been homesick a lot. I think being separated from my family has been the single most difficult part of my adjustment to college. But when I think about how much I love my family, and how I know that they are always there for me, I realize that I am very, very lucky. I think it was homeschooling that allowed this closeness to develop. As a kid and even a teenager, the majority of my time was spent around my family, and I've always felt that our relationship is completely open. I've never had secrets from my parents. Unlike almost 100% of my peers here at school, I've never had a disagreement with my parents about what time I come home at night. My parents wouldn't dream of giving me a flat curfew. I tell them when I will be home, and they trust me not to do anything stupid. This may sound very conceited, but I honestly think I know better than to do a lot of the things my schooled friends have done. I guess the fundamental thing that makes this trust between my parents and me work is that for the most part, we agree on what's a good idea and what's not.

I think it's very sad that in popular culture, families aren't very cool. Leaving home and being free is cool - living at home is not. Calling your family as many times a week as you can afford is definitely not. I question the cultural assumption that anyone who lives at home after the age of 18 is a loser or a freeloader. I know in a lot of other cultures extended family groups share a house or a compound, and this makes a lot of sense to me. When I someday have a family of my own, I want to live near my parents. Now I need to live in New York because of my dancing, but if my chosen career was something I could train for in Vermont, I would want to live at home.

Everywhere in society, people are looking for pseudo-families. People have groups of friends. They value close relationships between co-workers, in which members care about and depend on one another. A lot of romanticism is attached to the trust and interdependence in sports teams. It seems obvious that people are social animals who seek close-knit groups. Everyone wants to be trusted, valued, and accepted. I think families are the most basic institutions of these relationships. Yet in our society, they seem to be the most difficult to keep intact. I think families are put under a great deal of stress when kids are sent off to school at the tender age of five years or younger. Spending so much time away from the family during their formative years means that by the time they are teenagers, neither kids nor parents know each other well enough to share the trust and respect that is so necessary for maintaining a good relationship as teens become more independent.

Of all the wonderful things homeschooling has allowed me to have, I think my closeness with my family is by far the most precious. Wherever I go, I will always have them. Whenever I come home, I will not only know I love them, but I will like being around them.

Rejecting the Boundaries

While working with Grace Llewellyn two years ago, Josanna Crawford often wrote and spoke about her homeschooling; this is her first contribution to GWS.

In *Gertrude*, Herman Hesse wrote, "What a person really is and experiences, how he develops and matures, grows feeble and dies, is all indescribable. The lives of ordinary working people can be boring but the activities and destinies of idlers are interesting."

I do not believe any person is born ordinary. We are trained ordinary by school and working institutions. Unschoolers are no more brilliant than those who school; it is merely their rejection of boundaries that is profound.

An unschooling life is limitless and extends into all other parts of life because eventually unschoolers realize that unschooling is much more than not being at school. A veil is lifted from life. We become participants in our own minds, passionate to learn the world.

Recently, I had been working full time with develop-

mentally disabled adults. I loved them, and I loved what I was doing, but I couldn't bear working in an institution, and I've cut back to part time. This showed me that I'm going to have to figure out how to extend unschooling into my working life. I'm going to have to create my own work, outside an institution. This is much harder than leaving school as a child! But I know it's what I need to do.

Those who have never been forced to go to school are fortunate. Just recently I have started watching preschool-aged children in public. The unabashed power of their minds and bodies makes me hysteric. They are unschoolers whose raw fomenting intrinsic logic is untouched. If I have children I will never force the veiling of their logic or dictate meaninglessness. They will have choice.

The longing to learn is what I spend my life sanctifying because in this world, idlers must fight to idle, defend the reality of their life, prove it innate.

Christian whittling at age 6 ...

... and, below, fly tying at Yellowstone, age 18

Follow the Learners

Christian McKee wrote often for GWS over the years about such topics as learning German, setting goals for himself, and learning in groups. Now he writes:

If, sometime in the future, my parents and I have a terrible falling out, I will still be grateful to them for their decision to homeschool me. After 19 years of homeschooling, I am about to become a full-time college student. Homeschooling has, I think, prepared me for that better than a traditional education ever could have. It has given me a tremendous amount of self-confidence and motivation, which have grown out of an education that was left, in large part, up to me.

My parents grappled with really difficult questions as they played the dual roles of child rearers and primary educators. For many years, when my sister and I were younger, we followed a semi-traditional curriculum: Miquon Math books, Great Books, summer school science classes, and the like. However, after I could read, write, and do eighth-grade math, my parents turned me loose to follow my own interests and ambitions. From that point on, my life has been filled with learning and exploration, almost at my leisure, and I hope it will be similarly filled in years to come.

Where some parents would be worried about a 15-year-old who reads fly fishing books all day non-stop, my parents encouraged it, and while I didn't see any purpose to it at the time, they made me document my activities. They supported me in spending more time at the radio station where I'm now a news engineer. While I was engaged in these activities, I stayed away from the elements of a mainstream high school curriculum: math, history, and the like. But it was my parents' faith in my self-direction that helped me develop the self-confidence that has been so important in recent times.

My parents' release of control, and willingness to follow me and support my plans, was the central element of my education. This was especially true when it came to college – getting into the educational system we had shunned for so long. In many ways, it was my history of homeschooling that made me attractive to many of the schools to which I applied. It was the wide range of subjects I had studied and the depth to which I took those pursuits that made me stand out among the stack of applications. One Dean of Admissions said he was thrilled at the prospect of having more students with unusual backgrounds – in particular, homeschoolers.

If I were given a forum to address the educators of the world, my message would be simply to follow the learners; they know best where to go. By following the interests of children as they learn about their world, we can more easily bring to light individual brilliance, something that often gets lost in today's homogenized world. I have been one of the lucky few who escaped this status quo, again thanks to the educational farsightedness of my parents. I only hope it's contagious.

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Emily Bergson-Shilcock (right), at 7, playing store with younger sister Julia ...

... and, below, working in her own store, at 18
(see her mother's story, p. 41)

Able to Make Choices

Emily Bergson-Shilcock was recently interviewed for GWS's "Late Readers Turn Out OK" Focus. Now she writes:

One of the ways that I still feel like a homeschooler, even at 19, is in my ability to really *think* about situations and choices I have to make. I found many examples of this during this past year, my first year at college. One was during an orientation session last summer. Each new student was assigned an advisor based on our indicated area of interest; we were supposed to meet with the advisor to choose our classes for the first semester. I soon learned, however, that the word "choose" did not mean what I thought it did (i.e., making a decision). Instead, it meant that the student was supposed to sit quietly in the uncomfortable classroom chair while the academic advisor told the student what "all the other freshmen always take." We were then expected to copy, word for word and letter for letter, the course codes onto our enrollment forms and then sign on the dotted line (although the student signature counted for absolutely nothing, because you could not enroll unless the advisor also signed the form).

To the shock of my advisor, I did not act as expected. Instead I sat down and began to ask questions before she even had a chance to tell me what to do. Her nervous mannerisms began to show as it became clear that she was not equipped to help anyone who asked a question that was not part of the normal meeting. Not only did she seem to be lacking many of the answers that I sought, but she began to appear uneasy with the conversation. She made a few desperate attempts to regain control: "You have to take a language the first semester." I asked why. "Because freshmen always take a language first semester," she replied as her jaw dropped open.

By this point it was clear that she had no answers to my questions, so I decided just to write down the courses she expected me to take and deal with the situation later on. I saw that this hectic orientation session, with each student allotted only about three minutes with the advisor, was not the right time to resolve the problem. I politely thanked my advisor for her time, shook her hand, and walked out. Although I did follow the herd of students to the Registrar's office to enroll officially in my classes, I did not intend to take the course load I had indicated on my form. Although two of the standard freshmen courses were courses I truly wanted to take and could see a good reason for taking, I also had good reasons for *not* wanting to take the other two (in one case, I had already heard from last year's freshmen how boring and badly taught one of them was.) The next morning, I called the Dean of Academic Affairs and said that I simply wasn't interested in taking two of the courses. She was surprised but said that was all right. I dropped them and then added two courses that I did want to take. Although I was pleased with my assertiveness, I had no idea how out of the ordinary it was until I was finished with the first week of classes. Then it hit me: everyone I knew was taking what their advisor had told them everyone else was going to take.

One of my newfound friends asked me why I was allowed to take what I wanted to take while she had to take what her advisor told her to take. I asked, "What did you tell your advisor you wanted to take?" She replied, "He never asked me."

I found this to be a clear example of failing to think independently. It would never occur to me to let someone else, who's known me for about 10 seconds, tell me what courses to take instead of trusting my own judgment. And, after all, I am the one paying a huge sum to attend college, and, in essence, I've hired my advisor to advise me, not force me. As the days passed, more and more students were dumbfounded that I had chosen my courses. It began to be this big thing: "Hey guys, did you know that we can actually make a choice?"

I think that this one example represents a general feeling of youth (and a good deal of adults) today. There seems to be this overwhelming feeling that someone above, someone better, someone who knows more than you, will always be making the decisions. As far as I'm concerned, if this were the only benefit of homeschooling (although, in fact, I believe it is one of 50,000 benefits), it would still be worth it.

Even the ability to decide when to go to bed is a good

example. I saw a huge difference between college students who could and couldn't make this decision intelligently. The few who had never had a set bedtime and so had had to decide it for themselves before coming to college were now able to regulate their activities, homework, and social life so that they would get the amount of sleep they felt they needed to get through the next day successfully. However, for the many students who had never had a chance to regulate their own bedtime (or at least not until they were in late middle school or high school), it was as if they had no idea how much sleep they needed to be alert in the morning (or even to pull themselves out of bed).

Although I could go on for days about the advantages in life that people who are used to making responsible decisions have over those who do not, I will just say that I am grateful that I have been able to have control over my choices.

The Strength of Self-Discipline

Emily Murphy wrote to us about her friendships with adults when she was 16, and we later interviewed her about her college admissions process. Now she writes:

Although it has been seven years since I "graduated" from "high school," one of the greatest legacies of my nine years of homeschooling is that I still consider myself very much a homeschooler. I am always learning, always curious, and always willing to share my knowledge with those who are interested.

Homeschooling has given me what I believe is one of my greatest strengths: self-discipline. The college I attended, St. John's College in Annapolis, Maryland, is known as the "Great Books" college. Its program is grounded in reading, discussing, and writing about the greatest works of western culture. It is an extremely demanding program, made more so by the fact that students are given a great deal of homework and a great deal of free time in which to complete it. Because of my homeschooling experience, I was used to developing my own schedule and setting the priorities for the tasks I needed to complete. I was one of the few people in my class who was able to juggle homework, a job, and many extracurricular activities such as fencing, chorus, theatre, and horseback riding, and still get a decent amount of sleep at night.

However, I did not need to wait for college for my self-discipline to pay off. Because of the flexibility of my schedule, at an early age I was able to volunteer at a local museum, one of the most exciting and valuable experiences I have ever had. In addition to its being simply a fun experience, I was able to parlay this early experience into more jobs during my high school and college years in libraries, museums, and archives. Because of this experience, when I applied for the position I now hold, as Assistant Registrar and Curator of Photographs at the Maryland State Archives, I found that all those jobs I had had since I was 14 added up to four and a half years of full-time experience in my field – more than enough experience to exempt me from the MA requirement for my position!

Self-discipline has served me well over the years, but it is useless without skills to be disciplined about. The single most important skill I gained from my years of homeschooling I owe entirely to my parents' perseverance: the ability to write. When I left school after third grade, I was so intimidated by the teachers who criticized me for bad handwriting (never mind that I was writing complex sentence structure long before anyone else in my grade) that I would not even write my own name. It was not until my last years at home that I was able to sit down and write without a fight, and now I even get some small enjoyment from the creative process that goes into writing. I was once asked in an interview what was the single most important piece of advice I could give a young homeschooler. I would still give the same advice I gave then: learn to write well and to appreciate others' good writing. You don't have to enjoy it, you just have to be able to do it on demand and do it well. It is still astonishing to me, particularly in a profession where I meet a lot of people who are supposed to be highly educated, how many of them are unable to write well. In a time when so many young people are coming out of good schools with glowing recommendations, employers must find other criteria for judging candidates, and I think that good writing skills are among the main attributes employers in just about any profession look for.

I am often asked if I would homeschool my own

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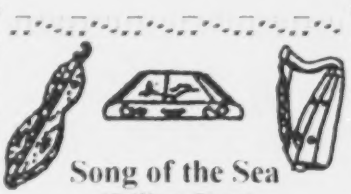

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children. I still don't know if I could – I doubt if I would have the patience to go through what I and my siblings put my parents through. All I know is that I have accomplished much in a short time: at age 24 I have a B.A. from a good school, I have published a 200-page book (a history of St. John's), and I have managed to get the Assistant Registrar and Curator job I described above. Although a great deal of this is due to my own dedication and ingenuity, I owe a huge debt of gratitude to my parents for laying the groundwork of that dedication and ingenuity. At a time when homeschooling was practically unheard of, my parents were willing to try an experiment with an angry 9-year-old. Thanks, Mom and Dad, for believing in me and, most important, for teaching me that learning never stops.

Is it Possible to Love Your Work?

Kim Stewart (formerly Kim Kopel) wrote often for GWS throughout her teenage years about many aspects of self-directed learning and about her internship at a living history village when she was 18. Now she writes:

I read an article about jobs a few months ago by a woman who had homeschooled her son, now in his mid-20s. She was wondering how homeschooling prepares young people for this society, how we can go out into the workforce to become slaves to our jobs after being raised to be free. Did we escape being stifled in school as children, only to grow into adults stifled in boring jobs? She said exactly what I've always felt – that it's insanity to work simply for a paycheck. If you don't love your work, the money isn't worth it.

I grew up watching most of the people around me go day after day to jobs they hated, resigned to being miserable because they believed they had no other choice. They went to college because they hoped a degree would enable them to earn more money, not because they were enthusiastic about what they would learn or about the work they would do when they graduated. They had interests and dreams, but they put them aside. I felt sad for them and worried for myself as I wondered, "Is this what's in store for me?"

I'd grown up doing the things I loved, free to pursue whatever interested me. Because I had that freedom, I had a sense that whatever I dreamed of doing, I could do. The idea of spending my life doing work I disliked or didn't care about, simply to earn money, was terrifying. It was more than a little confusing; on the one hand, people out in the workplace were telling me that it's impossible to support yourself doing work you love, and on the other hand, I felt in my heart that it was possible. To prove it, I had the examples of a handful of people I knew who loved their jobs and weren't starving.

Since I've been out on my own, I've proved for myself that, though it's not always easy, it really is possible to earn a living doing work I love. Having grown up free, I'm very resistant to giving up that freedom. But still I've struggled, trying to figure out how to do what I love and support myself. Sometimes I've chickened out and taken jobs that I wasn't enthusiastic about because I needed to earn money and I was afraid to step out on a limb and go for what I really wanted. But life is teaching me that I'd better listen to my heart and soul and do what is truly important to me or I will be miserable. It's easy to feel that my dreams are impossible to reach and to feel pushed into that safe, boring job by the fear of not making enough money to live on. But the truth is, nothing in life is safe, if by safe we mean static and unchanging. There's no path I can choose that has no unknowns, no risks, no challenges. So I might as well go after my dreams.

My current dream is to have my own flourishing massage therapy practice somewhere in New England. I've been pursuing this dream for two years now; I spent a year in massage therapy school and have been practicing part time for a year and a half. I left my practice in St. Louis last summer to move to mid-Missouri to be with Sean, my husband, while he finishes college. Right after I moved I took a job as a receptionist – a good example of panicking and taking a safe job. It didn't take long to realize that not only didn't I like the job but I'd cheated myself by not even giving myself a chance to start another massage practice after I'd moved. So I began looking into all my options: renting office space with other massage therapists, working out of a chiropractor's office, having a practice in my home. I called the local massage therapy school to see if they knew of any opportunities, and it just so happened that a hair salon had an opening for a massage therapist. It seemed like the perfect situation, so I quit my receptionist job and took the one at the salon. For five months I tried to make it work, but no matter what I did, I couldn't make it into the kind of practice I wanted. I was confused; I had this great opportunity to do what I loved, so why was I miserable? I finally realized that it just wasn't the right place for me. Some massage therapists thrive in the salon atmosphere, but I just wasn't comfortable there, and I realized that no matter how hard I tried, I would never be able to build up my practice there.

I decided instead to do something completely different for a while. It was a difficult decision to come to, because I love doing massage and I didn't want to put my dream on hold at the drop of a hat. But I'm at peace with the decision because I know it's the right thing for right now, and it won't be for very long. We'll be moving to New England next spring after Sean graduates, and once there I'll be able to begin building up my dream practice. And just moving to New England will be a dream come true in itself: I fell in love with the area after spending a year there, and I promised myself I'd move back someday. After I married Sean, I was a little worried that he might not feel the same way, but fortunately after traveling there last summer he fell in love with it, too.

In the meantime, I'm working at a café. I decided I needed a change of pace, something light and fun. I had reservations at first; I thought, "Is there any way that working at someplace like a café will be as rewarding and soul-satisfying to me as doing massage?" It's very important to me to do work that really touches and affects people's hearts and souls. That's what I love about massage; you don't just touch people's bodies and help them heal, you

touch their souls.

But I love working at the café. What I realized from working there is that no matter what work we do, when we come in contact with other people, we touch their souls and they touch ours. Whether I'm laying my hands on them for healing in a massage or saying hello as I pass someone on the street or acknowledging someone's existence as I hand them their biscotti and latte over a counter, I am connecting with them. We can bring heart and soul to all that we do and realize the value of our work as being much more than the sum of what we accomplish or produce. The real value is in who we are, who we become, in our ability to reach out and connect with others and, in doing so, connect with ourselves.

I Think of What I Can Do

Vanessa Keith wrote to GWS about being a teenage homeschooler 14 years ago, when letters from teenage homeschoolers were rare indeed. Now she writes:

I've been doing agricultural work for the past few years. Recently, I decided to make a big change and to try to support myself by making things and selling them. I make knit mittens, and as I work to build up that business I'm also working part time at a vegetable farm. When I decided to make the change, I didn't think, "I'll go back to college and get a degree in something new," as a lot of people would think when they wanted to make a change in their working lives. Instead I think to myself, "What am I going to do to change, what can I make to sell or how can I earn money in another way, and also how can I live more cheaply in the meantime?" I think of what I can do, instead of what kind of schooling to get, and I think that's different from a lot of people.

I also notice that I enjoy work more than a lot of other people, but my parents are the same way, so I don't know if I got that attitude from homeschooling or just from being around my parents. On the other hand, it's hard to separate the two because my homeschooling meant being very involved in my parents' work. I went with my parents to pick fruit and prune apple trees and I was a part of it from a young age. We had crews that we worked on and helped organize, and I was a full member of the crew by age 13. I was earning a fair amount of money that I got to keep and having responsibilities which I'm sure raised my self-esteem. But we didn't work all the time. Since our work was seasonal, when we were home we had more time to pursue our individual projects and interests.

At various times in my adult life I've had jobs that were sort of menial and temporary, like making Christmas wreaths for a month, but I noticed that other people in those jobs had very negative attitudes about them, whereas I'm more likely to feel that I've chosen that job and that I'm doing it because it enables me to do something else that I want to do. I'm coming to it from a feeling of

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"I find myself writing letters, more or less about the same thing, to a number of people, a growing number, many of whom are now beginning to write letters to each other, and it seemed to me that a newsletter would be a way in which we could all exchange our ideas and experiences. I'm quite excited about this, have lots of ideas for things to put in it, think it could be useful to many people."

– John Holt in a letter to a parent, June 1977

empowerment rather than disempowerment.

Now, at 28, homeschooling doesn't come up much for me, and I don't discuss it much when meeting new people. In job interviews, for example, it doesn't come up anymore, because people are more interested in my work experience than my schooling, whereas a few years ago, when I was closer to college age, it came up more.

When I think of what I can say to people who are homeschooling now, one thing I think of has to do with a question in GWS a while ago about homeschooling during difficult times. When I was 13, my mother had a baby who died, and then a year later, when I was 14, she had another who also died. That was of course a very difficult time for the whole family. I feel in retrospect that I didn't have enough mentors and friends of my own to help me through that time, and I think having mentors, or just friends outside the family, really helps during difficult family situations. I didn't want to be in school then – I think it would have been even more of an upheaval to start going to school at that time – but it would have been nice to have other places to go or other people to turn to. As I got older, something that was really good about my homeschooling was the lessons I got with other people besides my parents. For instance, I would have a lesson in sewing with someone and then in exchange I would help my teacher with a carpentry project, tearing down a building, painting, gardening, or whatever they needed help with. I gained many skills incidentally from these exchanges.

Education is Life

Tim Rodriguez has read GWS for years but hadn't written to us until he saw the announcement for the anniversary issue. Then, he told us, "I had the opportunity to meet John Holt in his office when I was a young child, and now, having grown up homeschooled with GWS, I feel I should write something *for the 20th anniversary of the magazine I grew up with."*

I consider education to be an ongoing process, not something you can take classes in and then be done with. Unfortunately, that's not what our society seems to think. But homeschooling gave me the freedom to do what I'm interested in and to learn in the manner that works best for me. This was true whether I was learning everything I could about dinosaurs at age 7, or learning everything I could about computers as a teenager. From what I know about school, I wouldn't have been able to go into as much depth, in either case, if I attended school. I visited high school for a day because I was itching to take a computer class there, but I changed my mind and ended up learning more on my own, from reading and experimenting. Then I got an internship at a computer company, which eventually, in a roundabout way, led to my current job doing Web development. No one asked about my schooling when I was applying for this job; they were interested in the experience I had and the home page I had already designed, and I learned the skills I needed from teaching myself. Education is life, you can't do a whole lot without it, and the way I have been educated has been truly wonderful.

Realizing It's OK to Quit

Dawn Shuman's earlier letters to GWS explored the question of whether to attend high school (she didn't) and whether to attend college (she did). Now she writes:

I know that homeschooling has had wonderful and complex ramifications in my ways of thinking and my life. I've recently been made to think much more explicitly about this issue because I realized that my homeschooling outlook was affecting the way I handled a difficult decision.

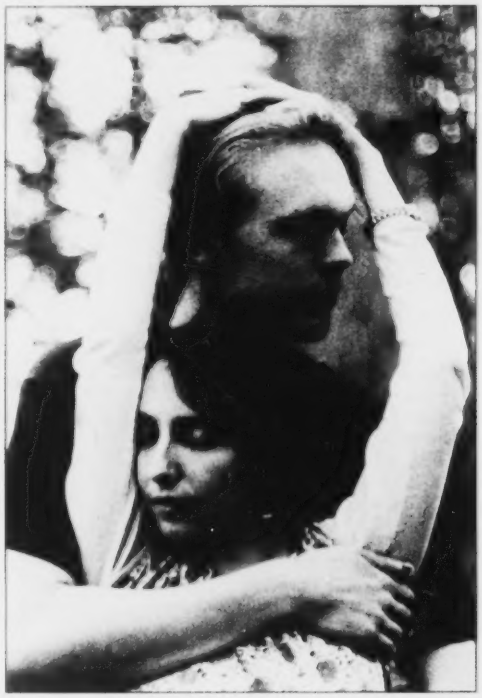
Before this busy spring semester had ended, I had already lined up a summer job as a temporary secretarial worker at the local hospital, where I had been working during the school year as a community service employee of the college. I knew it would be a boring job, but it was appealing for two reasons: I already had the job, it would be well paid in comparison to the retail or tourist jobs most of my acquaintances were getting, and I would get to go home at the end of the day and forget about it. The school year had developed into a very, very busy one, and I thought, "At this summer job, I'll spend about as much time working as I usually spend in classes during the year, but I won't have homework, so I'll have more free 'me' time."

I have now quit that job. It was a hard decision to make, but leaving my erstwhile work doing data entry was *right*, and in many ways similar to the decision parents and some kids make when they choose to homeschool.

There were a lot of problems with my job. I was supposed to be trained to substitute for various people. My experiences while homeschooling and in college have made me value and search out for myself teachers who are patient and willing to work cooperatively, and the first woman I worked with at this job was not able to give me this. She made learning my job harder than it ought to have been. Another more striking link between my dislike for my job and homeschoolers' dislike for conventional schooling was that I came home every day not ready to do fun, interesting, meaningful things, but stressed, tense, and defensive from dealing with what I felt was a hostile situation all day. Hence, I was prone to procrastinate, to feel overwhelmed, and to interact poorly with my fiancé, Matthew Borchelt. This description is a perfect reflection of what my mother says I was like when I went to school from kindergarten through third grade. I have less vivid

memories of that time period than she, but the way I felt did seem very familiar. One thing I do remember about grade school is getting a lot of headaches and feeling sick, wanting to be allowed to stay home. At work, I began to get migraines every day.

Dawn Shuman at 12, being playful in Japan at the end of her trip around the world with her father



Dawn at 20, with Matthew

After a week or two of thinking that I wanted to quit (and of Matthew wanting me to quit), we began to talk about it openly. Matt was also a homeschooler (we met at my best friend Katie's 13th birthday party, while she was still homeschooling, too) and the younger members of his family are still homeschooling. I think the fact that both of us have seen our parents and others struggling with decisions like this about school and homeschooling affected our thoughts about my current situation tremendously. Here are some of the reasons we felt it would be good for me to stop working: I had no time for individual growth/development, I had no time for my family (him) or friends (all the people I had not talked to in a month). Continuing to work was making me sick. The rewards of the job (financially speaking) did not seem to outweigh these objections to it. The first three of these ideas will sound immediately familiar to homeschoolers, and the last one will, too, if you think of the rewards as learning and "socialization" instead of a salary. Many times one parent in a family of potential homeschoolers will have serious doubts about the idea (my father was very much opposed to the idea for a long time). I feel very fortunate that Matt saw these problems with my job as clearly as I did and that he had a similar framework of independent thought through which to express them.

The supervisor for my department was not pleased with me when I told her I needed to stop working. We negotiated and I agreed to work another two weeks. The problems apparent during the first couple of weeks of the job were still there in the last two, but they were decidedly mitigated by the fact that there was now a definite limit to my "compulsory attendance."

On the evening that I finally decided to stop this job, I found myself thinking very clearly that I couldn't do this for purely negative reasons. If I did, I knew I would feel like I was quitting and failing and then I would be on the defensive to my friends and to myself. This was not exactly logical, because nearly everyone was supportive of the idea of my quitting (a support prospective homeschoolers don't always get!). What I needed, however, was to articulate some goals and objectives for myself. One of the most obvious is to investigate graduate schools and other options for my post-college life (I graduate next spring). Another is to begin planning our wedding for next summer. Those are very long-term projects. In the shorter term, I am working on making the apartment we just moved into a home, and getting back in touch with the people I care about but have had little time to communicate with. I have one more goal too, which is peculiarly difficult to let myself accomplish: after that job and the hectic pace of the last school year, I need some down time, some playful, healing time. I don't remember having any difficulty with this concept when I left school at age 9. I read, and read, and read, and felt not even slightly guilty for not getting anything "done." Now I worry about not getting anything done, even on days when we succeed in rearranging half our furniture. This gives me more insight into the trouble my parents and other grown-ups had in my childhood and adolescence accepting the less-structured unschooling approach toward which I always leaned. However, I believe it is all right for me to relax for at least a little while, and something which helps me to hold to this principle is the memory of how I felt the morning after I quit the job: I felt such incredible *relief*, a sensation which also evokes the time when my parents took me out of school.

"Putting out the magazine is an immense labor, far more than I thought it would be, and also an immense source of joy and satisfaction. ... If on the one hand the work we are doing does not reach more than a small number of people, it is true on the other hand that to these it makes an immense difference."

– John Holt in a letter to a friend, 8/25/80

Talking About Homeschooling

Amanda Bergson-Shilcock's writing for GWS over the years has explored doing homeschooling publicity, teaching history to her siblings, interacting with school students, and many other subjects. Now she writes:

One of homeschooling's greatest gifts to me has been an indirect one, and it took me years to recognize it.

The outside world has consistently been interested in my life. As a child, I could pluck a book *I* wanted to read from the shelf, or scamper down to the creek at 8:00 in the morning and never get summoned home, or spend all my waking hours playing with my dolls. This was my everyday reality. It was only gradually that I saw that this was not only atypical but downright incredible in society's eyes. I began to understand that some people looked at my life and saw not just childhood but radicalism, and, intrigued, they wanted to know how it worked.

This morning a researcher called and spoke with me for an hour and a half about homeschooling. It was actually the set-up for an extended interview I'll be having with her at a later date, and, in preparation for that meeting, she was calling to give me a list of topics to mull over. Anyone who's ever talked about homeschooling can guess what some of those topics were, but one thing the researcher seemed especially intrigued by was the fact that, even after well over a decade of such conversations, I'm still enthusiastic about *talking* about homeschooling. I've always liked talking about home-schooling, partly because I happen to like words. And yet over the years, my conversations have changed. At first I believed that every child got quizzed as I did, and I simply took it in stride, but by the time I was 9 I knew this wasn't so. Then for several years I simply had The Conversation with people. You know the one; it begins "Isn't that illegal?" and progresses to "But what about socialization?" Every time I had The Conversation I tried to refine my phrasing or find a new way to talk about familiar themes. And then, slowly, I began to grow beyond that to find myself

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learning from the conversations.

When I was a child, I sometimes thought about a hazy future in which I would no longer be a homeschooler. I was almost 20 years old and three years past the end of my state-mandated education when I realized that that future didn't exist for me. I am and will always be a homeschooler. This has been further brought home to me by several incidents in the course of my college career.

In the beginning, it was passing moments which reinforced some of the differences between me and my classmates, such as references to the universal experience of the SAT (I hadn't taken it) or a classmate asking me on my first day, "Do you think it will be possible to get an A in this class?", not realizing that that wasn't important to me. Like other things I had experienced a million times before, these comments were just reminders that I didn't share the culture I inhabited. I didn't do much to alter this initially; I didn't discuss my homeschooling background with anyone at college unless they specifically asked.

But now that has changed. Rather than tuning out the elements of college culture that I don't share and sitting passively as school talk swirls around me, I now try to bring another point of view to the discussion. For example, my sociology class is talking about communities and I chime in with an example of a community – the homeschooling community – that is neither geographic in nature nor obvious to outsiders. My writing class is talking about the difference between writing about a teenage event as a teenager or writing about the event 20 years after the fact, and I start to push the boundaries of what teenagers "should" be capable of. My American Civilization class is talking about the high dropout rate of urban Asian American high schoolers, and I gently mention that the concern might be slightly misplaced: is the problem what these young people are *not* doing (school) or is it something else?

But most important of all, more important even than bringing a different perspective to the table, is what *I* learn when I talk about homeschooling. It is a truism that teaching is a uniquely effective way of learning, and that holds true in this case. My nontraditional slant colors how I see the world and how I participate in it, *and the more I talk to people about homeschooling, the more I explain it to myself.*

I didn't sit down as an 8-year-old and say to my parents, "Look, I'm never going to go to school, it's going to give me a really cool take on the world, and I'm going to spend the rest of my life being surprised by that and surprising other people." I couldn't have imagined that, let alone had the foresight to predict it. But now I can be halfway through an interview and stop, mid-sentence, simply to hear what I just said, and I realize: I never articulated it to myself this way before.

Constant, forced, externally imposed self-examination could be overwhelming, even crushing. But I'm lucky enough that for me, self-reflection has been another tool in my kit, another way of poking at an issue. Homeschooling taught me that it was not only OK but actually desirable to think about what schooled society and I, a homeschooler, could learn from each other.

"Editing *Growing Without Schooling*, and the wonderful letters people write me ... fill up my mind with thoughts that I want to write down, but could hardly write even if there were 72 hours in the day."
– John Holt in a letter to Ivan Illich, 5/24/78

Last fall I startled myself by writing two 3000-word essays on homeschooling, a subject that most people, myself included, would have assumed I had wrung dry. But these essays – one for a sociology professor whose class I was taking, another for a sociology professor who lives 500 miles away and sent me a questionnaire to answer – taught me two things. First, that there was still more in me to say; second, that bouncing old questions off new walls can produce new answers and new awareness.

I said before that one of homeschooling's greatest gifts to me has been indirect. It's the gift of a kaleidoscope. The world looks different through a homeschooler's eyes, but homeschooling itself also changes and shimmers in the light of the outside world. It's a good balance.

Homeschooling Before GWS

Kerchival Holt (no relation to John!) homeschooled before *GWS existed, so this is his first contribution to the magazine.*

I was homeschooled as a teenager from 1970 to 1976. I am now fast approaching my 40th birthday and am an engineer working for Hewlett-Packard in Cupertino, California.

My family became involved in homeschooling basically because the public schools were very rigid and did not address varied patterns of learning. My pattern perhaps came from having parents who encouraged independent, critical thinking. The schools in my small New England town in the 1970s seemed geared toward creating a set of homogeneous children. I have three brothers who were also homeschooled, and we all pursued very different interests.

Homeschooling meant following my curiosity with full force. I was fortunate to have parents who provided support and resources without constantly trying to channel and guide me. I would be very focused on one thing for weeks and months; this was a pattern that worked best for me.

There were also difficult moments in my homeschooling. The community didn't quite understand why we were homeschooling, and I felt very much alone at times, although it helped to have my brothers.

The experience I had 25 years ago laid a framework for how I approach my lifelong learning. I credit the years of homeschooling with giving me the ability to see the world in novel and inventive ways. ◆

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A Collection of Surprises

Parents tell about what they have learned from homeschooling and what they've done that they never expected to do

Looking at an Endless Frontier

From Debbie Westheimer (OH):

When our oldest son, Gabe, finished up first grade at a Montessori school in 1988, we had already made the decision not to send him or his brother to school in the coming fall. A friend who taught at a Waldorf school informed me of a watercoloring class for children that was to be held that summer. I signed Gabe up. What I remember about it is the realization that by taking my child out of a space that subscribed to a particular educational philosophy, I was now open to a whole range of ideas about how we learn. At the time, I was awed, as if I were a pioneer or pilgrim standing on top of a hill looking out at an endless frontier.

It was this feeling that mobilized me to be active in my *own* learning. I made certain to continue to follow my heart's desire and learn what I wanted to learn – not because I wanted to be a model for my children but because I am alive and worth it. And having my own interests helps me better experience full-time mothering.

Most recently, I have noticed another way in which I have been affected by homeschooling. I am certain that I have a broader sense about options for learning particular skills than I had before. For example, my mother and I both have an interest in learning more about using herbs medicinally. Her vision about how she would learn was that she would memorize books and take classes through an institution. This is one way to do it. I don't think it occurred to her that she could also apprentice to an herbalist or that she didn't have to memorize first but could instead start doing a bit here and a bit there and learn through doing it.

For Adults, Too

From Loretta Heuer (MA):

When 9-year-old Tad coined the phrase, "You don't have to go ... to grow!" at a GWS picnic 11 years ago, I didn't realize it would also describe my own life and learning. As a young parent I assumed that homeschooling was child-centered. Only later did I discover that homeschooling was a very adult endeavor, that it meant growing *with* your children.

If I've been my children's educational facilitator, they've been my educational catalysts. Because of them I've learned to speak Italian, listen to classical music, and appreciate my Celtic heritage. I renewed my ability to read Latin, developed an affection for Shakespearean drama and Elizabethan England, and discovered that after birthing and band-aiding children, I'm no longer squeamish dissecting a fetal pig.

Although I've grown and changed because of homeschooling, certain things haven't changed. I'm still an idealist. I'm still passionately political. I still confront and challenge convention. I still believe traditional educators can learn valuable lessons from us. And I'm still convinced that our family's decision to homeschool has changed the world and made it a better place to be.

Becoming an Education Professor

From Jacque Ensign of Virginia:

One thing that I never expected I would do as a result of homeschooling was to be a university professor. It's not that I never thought I couldn't, it's that I didn't think I would be able to do it because I had spent so many years outside of the system. I was a part of the 60s "chuck the system and do it myself" mentality. Being heavily influenced by Illich, Freire, and Holt, I had decided that the school system wasn't worth perpetuating. I homeschooled my children to give them the best academic and social experiences that I could – and smugly noted every report about how bad schools were becoming. Now I'm a full-time professor of education and special education, teaching undergraduate and graduate classes.

When I was interviewed, I relied heavily on my experiences in homeschooling. The university was looking for someone to revamp their approach to education and I had definite ideas

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about empowering students to capitalize on their own strengths. I spoke about the value of projects, of letting children mature on their own timetables, of trusting children and teachers. They knew I had homeschooled my children and that I continue to work in the homeschooling movement evaluating portfolios for families in Virginia. They hired me. I've even had homeschoolers come to my class to talk about their education. The results have been gratifying as I've watched future teachers develop a respect and curiosity for how homeschoolers learn.

I'd be guilty of painting too rosy a picture to leave it at that, though. The new teacher ed program I helped draft was defeated by a faction of hard-line traditional professors who objected to a lack of traditional courses. The system is tough to alter, but I know that I am planting living seeds in my students of what possibilities there are in education when we think outside of our box. I'm gratified that my own three are great at thinking outside the box, even when living inside boxes by choice (going to schools and colleges).

Letting Go of Expectations

From Debbie Kniffin (VT):

"Are you qualified to teach your children?" Almost 20 years and four children later, the words still echo: a verbal challenge which, as it turns out, has had very little to do with academics and much more to do with my own personal transformation. Life as I'd experienced it (having been raised not to rock the boat and to do as told, unquestioningly) was instantly and continuously challenged with our decision to homeschool. Over time, I've realized an increased sense of inner calm and strength. Years of experience and experiments have helped me let go of expectations and fixed ideas and have required that I develop flexibility, patience, adaptability, and openness. Probably the greatest change I recognize in myself is an increased faith and an appreciation for the miracle of human development and human potential.

We moved to Vermont twelve years ago, settling in a town we had discovered in the GWS Directory! We continue to enjoy being part of a homeschool community and are grateful for the connections we have made. Our town still boasts six homeschooling families in a town of 550.

We convey our heartfelt thanks to GWS, which, over the years, has provided us support, encouragement, information, friends, community, and the courage to follow our hearts so our children can follow theirs.

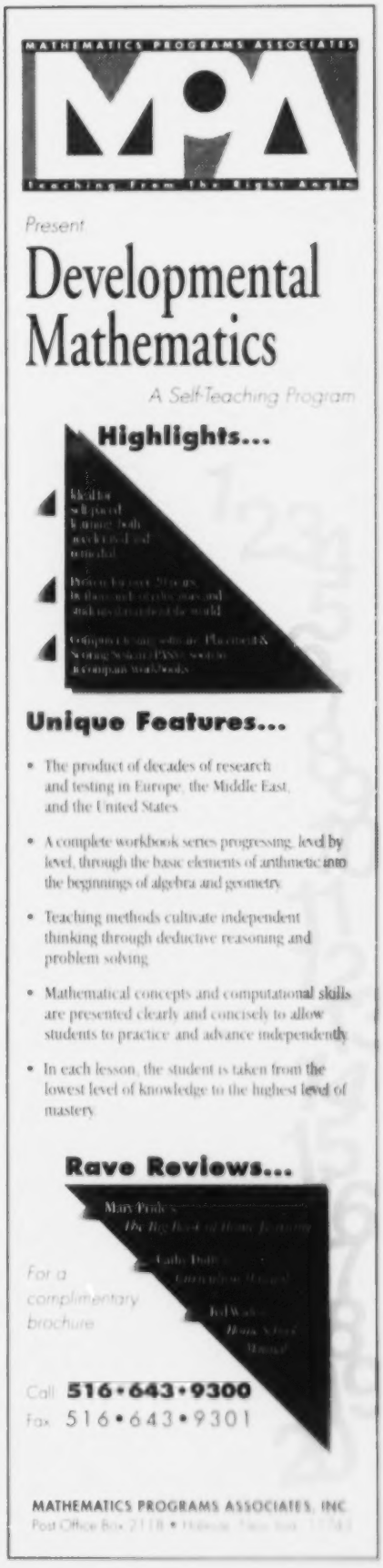
Able to Learn Anything

From Jill Boone (CA):

When I began homeschooling 13 years ago, I had no idea what a powerful decision it was. As I grew with my children, I came to feel able to learn anything, tackle any topic, and carry the joy of discovery into it. Just at the point when I thought my three kids had challenged me to find a resource or a way to learn every subject possible, my 13-year-old decided he wanted to learn ancient Greek. I decided to learn it along with him; why not? Now we work with a Greek tutor who is a graduate student at Stanford and who just happened to have been homeschooled herself.

The power behind the decision to homeschool is that we take control of our own lives, accept responsibility for our children and their education, and at the same time, work through our old school and learning stuff which we have carried into our adult lives. And our children are launched into adulthood with a greater sense of themselves and a clearer picture of their abilities and paths.

Another thing I learned was that it's all right for children to learn at different ages. I must say that I'm glad it was my third child who learned to read at age 8, rather than my first. Even with my strong philosophical basis for learning at one's own pace, I am not sure I could have withstood the pressure from others if Curtis had been my first child. The experience of having two other children who had learned to read helped me to be patient. When Curtis was 5, I knew he wasn't ready to read yet because he never noticed the words on the milk carton or the street signs. When he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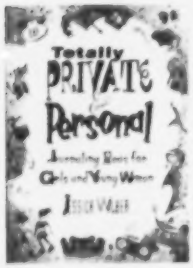

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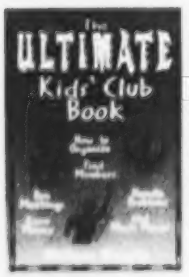

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first picked up the carton at age 8 and asked what the words said, I thought, "Aha! He is getting ready to read!" I don't remember my oldest, Cristie, ever *not* noticing the words, and she learned to read at age 3. Paul, our second, learned at age 5. And now all three, as teenagers, read well and enjoy it. Cristie reads mostly science fiction and poetry, Paul reads computer manuals and Calculus books for fun, and Curtis, my "late reader," reads mythology, science fiction, and Ancient Greek. It will never matter again at what age they learned, and we avoided the trauma school kids often experience when they are not on the expected learning schedule. Neither Cristie, learning at 3, nor Curtis, learning at 8, ever thought that their timetable for learning was abnormal or felt less than thrilled when they discovered they could do it.

Learning about Learning

From Christina Gibbons of Ohio:

I never would have dreamed that homeschooling would have changed my life as much as it has. I have found myself becoming more of a nurturing parent than a didactic teacher, and I'm not always the one with the answers. I had a realization about this recently after doing physics experiments with my 9-year-old daughter, Sarah. I had read the book in advance and I knew which principles the experiments were designed to illustrate. So, when we did the experiments, I read Sarah the instructions and I already knew what to expect. Meanwhile, I would ask her, "What do you think is going to happen?" and she was able to guess, without knowing anything in advance. So, she actually arrived at the conclusions or principles through doing the experiments; she was able to make a genuine discovery, whereas I was only looking for what I had already read would happen.

It turned out that this meant that Sarah truly grasped the physics principles in a way that I didn't. We later went to a presentation on physics together, and Sarah was the one who knew the answers, while I had forgotten. She was able to make the bridge between what she had discovered through the experiment, because for her, the experiment had been an experience of discovery. I, on the other hand, wasn't able to make the jump or see the connection. The knowledge wasn't really mine because I hadn't discovered it for myself. So my daughter taught me something important about learning.

The Effect of Publication

From Judith Allee (OH):

In 1984, I thought homeschooling was drastic, but we were so desperate that we were open to any solution. Our 12-year-old, who had lived in a series of foster homes before he joined our family, was a square peg in a round hole at school. A friend lent me an entire set of GWS back issues and those dog-eared newsletters gave my family the hope, inspiration, and courage to start homeschooling at a time when Ohio was not a "safe" state for homeschoolers. We were underground for our first two years. After many legal ups and downs, Ohio is now one of the best states for homeschoolers.

By the time my younger child, Nancy, was school age, homeschooling was our first choice, not a drastic last-chance alternative. Through the years we've gotten many specific ideas from GWS, such as having regular music recitals in a nursing home and volunteering with the humane society. Through the GWS Directory, we have hosted traveling homeschoolers and visited host families in 15 states.

My daughter and I have both been published in GWS, and the effect has altered the direction of our paths. Two years ago, Nancy wrote for GWS #108's Focus on learning something that had been intimidating or overwhelming. She wrote about her experiences as a clown. I'll never forget the day the issue arrived in the mailbox with her piece inside and her photo on the cover! Being published changed Nancy's whole perception of herself as a writer.

My letter about homeschooling on a tight budget appeared in GWS #93. As a result, I was invited to speak on the same topic, and that eventually led to a book contract. For the past three

years, another homeschool mom and I have been working on that book, tentatively called *Homeschooling on a Shoestring*, due out in April 1998. To illustrate the book, we are looking for artwork from homeschooled kids, ages 5 to 19, and cartoons from anyone of any age, whether homeschooled or not. For guidelines, send a SASE to my co-writer, Melissa Morgan, PO Box 667, Pataskala OH 43061, or email her at wisestewards@sprynet.com. Our deadline is September 15, 1997. We would also love to hear from parents or children who have money-saving ideas to share.

Being a homeschool parent has been life-changing for me in many ways. I see value in researching whatever I'm interested in at the moment because I have seen how far those sparks of interest can carry you, sometimes in directions you never dreamed of. My current endeavors as a speaker and writer result from my learning to take my own interests seriously. Also, I've learned along with my children about science and history, subjects I found boring in school but now enjoy. I feel like a more informed citizen; having chosen to homeschool has taught me about rights, freedom, responsibility, and citizenship in a tangible, meaningful way. I am grateful that John Holt provided for others to carry on where he left off and that dedicated people have picked up his gauntlet and are continuing his work.

Awakening Imagination

From Natalie Mortensen (WA):

If it hadn't been for homeschooling my kids, I probably never would have begun writing. If I had not been able to closely observe my children's exploration of the world for the past twelve years, I would not have understood the paramount importance of one's imagination.

My children constantly challenge my perceptions, help keep my thinking fluid. The rope and fabric hanging environments my daughters made for their dolls back in 1985 taught me how the imagination fuels one's daily learning experiences and satisfies the creative urge. Today, my younger boys build elaborate block stadiums for their plastic lizard/dinosaur baseball games.

Twelve years ago, I felt afraid when I watched my children's imaginations at work. I didn't trust that my own, buried beneath a ton of structured education, could be excavated and saved. Over the years, however, the obvious pleasure my kids exuded as a result of their creative lives spilled over into mine. I *could* walk to my own creative edge without being afraid to jump in. Now, when I sit down every day to write, it is (usually) without fear.

I feel deeply grateful for John Holt's inspirations, the constancy and support of GWS, and for my kids who have shown me the way.

If I'd Known ...

Three readers reflect on what they wish they had known or understood about homeschooling when they began.

From a Louisiana reader:

My strongest thought is that the marriage situation – tension between my husband and me – fed my fears about everything else, including how my kids were doing in homeschooling. Basically, if the support I needed had been there in any form, I could have done better about having happier days, which would have been more productive. My husband was all for homeschooling and was as supportive as he could be, but he had other problems to deal with.

If I'd known, when I started homeschooling, what I know now, I'd have worked more on understanding how to improve our marriage than on feeling that the kids needed my constant attention. What I'd like to tell my former self is, "The kids will be OK. Fix the marriage, and *that* can fix the kids." In recent months, we have done a lot of thinking and re-evaluating. We really opened our eyes to what our problems had been, and things are going much better now.

•••

From Laura Weston (MD):

I'm homeschooling our four sons, ages 13, 9, 5, and 3 months. If I had it to do over, I would have started the

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three R's sooner with my older son. I may have been waiting for him to absorb academics through our daily activities. He learned a lot, but not about writing, spelling, and written math. So now we all spend at least one or two hours a day on workbooks, spelling, math, etc. Because my 5-year-old is working with his older brothers, he is learning these skills much faster than they did and it is much less frustrating for him. Not all families need to spend huge parts of their days on basic writing and math skills, but for us, we need sit-down time each day for these skills. That's challenging enough for these boys.

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From Carol Delaney (CT):

One lesson I have learned is the importance of untitled adults in a child's life – especially a teenager's life. My husband Peter and I cannot recall interacting with an adult while we were growing up who did not also have a title: coach, teacher, Scout leader, etc. My teenagers now have adult friends whom I have not met.

My son Michael began volunteering at a local theater last winter. The rest of the crew are senior citizens, and they have been most welcoming to Michael. He is given responsible work and his design ideas are given equal consideration. He has resolved construction difficulties, to his own surprise and pleasure. His twin brother, Francis, worked backstage this winter for a Gilbert and Sullivan company. I have met some of both boys' fellow workers, but the relationship feels like when I introduce my mother to my adult friends; I don't feel as if I'm Michael's mother meeting someone else with responsibility for him.

Both boys are members of a Star Trek discussion group whose membership previously included only adults. I have no similar experience in my early years to guide my opinion about Michael's and Francis's involvement in this group of adults. It felt right to respect the boys' judgment.

When my daughter Ruth was 10, she decided to sew a soft doll after watching me make one. She worked on it only when my knitters' group (which was made up of other adults) met. She would sit beside women she knew had made a doll and ask their advice as she sewed. Ruth learned techniques from these other women that I didn't know and she avoided the possible difficulties mother and daughter can experience when they know each other's shortcomings.

My younger son David began studying Irish step dancing this year. Very few boys dance. There are two adult men dancing at his school who have advised him on what clothes to wear in a dance competition (one favors kilts, the other pants) and they encourage him whenever they see him.

My children have always easily approached adults from whom they wish to learn. Many times I have rescued *my* dinner guest from their questions. It is interesing to observe how adults' react to the children's curiosity. Some are clearly uncomfortable speaking with children, some eagerly assume the role of teacher, and some talk as they would to another adult. The last are the ones most often cornered by the kids. In contrast, I don't recall ever speaking to my parents' dinner guests about anything.

Another very important connection with adults outside the family is possible because we homeschool. We have a very comfortable relationship with another homeschooling family that lives about 45 minutes from us. The older children in our families go to one another's homes for days at a time. I see this as extremely helpful in the teen years when parents and teens can clash over major and minor issues. The kids can just escape for a while to another household, and in the other home they have two adults with beliefs and a lifestyle similar to their own family's with whom they can talk things over. ◆

"Hundreds of people have written to say that they would never have had the *nerve* to homeschool their children if they hadn't had GWS." – John Holt in *The Mother Earth News*, July/August 1980

Snapshots of Freedom

Current homeschooling parents and kids give glimpses of what homeschooling makes possible for them.

MOST PEOPLE ASK me, "Would you rather go to school or do you like homeschooling?" My answer is that I like homeschooling. "Don't you wish you could go to school with other children?" is the next question. My answer is, "I see other children, just not in school."

One of the best things about homeschooling is that I can make my own decisions. I can decide if I want to do Spanish or piano or dance. My parents don't just pick the activities for me. For Spanish, I work with a woman from Chile. I go to her house. It's really fun. We play games in Spanish. I had an idea of what kind of teacher I wanted – I wanted her to be fun, but I also wanted to learn a lot – and I got to choose my teacher. If I ever really wanted to stop Spanish because I wasn't enjoying it anymore, I would be allowed to stop.

I learn piano from my friend's mother who teaches piano. It works out really well because I play with that friend a lot, so when I'm over there, that's where I get my piano lessons.

I like homeschooling because you don't have to do everything in a subject all at once. You can do a little bit of math, a little bit of reading, and then a little bit of piano. You can spread things out during the day. And in the morning, you get to sleep in!

– Sarah Gibbons of Ohio

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I DON'T KNOW whether we homeschool because we value different things than most of the people around us or whether we value different things because we homeschool, but this valuing is the main difference I see in our life without schooling. Sometimes this makes it difficult to communicate with others who assume that we are seeking success in the terms in which they understand it. After basic needs are met, what matters most to us is time to read and wonder and play music and watch the growing and changing in the natural world. We don't get awards or grades or promotions for these things and so to some folks it can look as if we are doing nothing at all, or nothing that makes sense to them.

Last year a young woman reporter from *Education Week* came to interview us for an article on why people homeschool. Joanna, then 14, was very interested in her work as a writer. I could see her imagining traveling all over the country and talking to people about their ideas and lives, writing articles to be published and getting paid to do it all. But in the course of the interviews, we mentioned the book *A Sense of Self*, and the reporter said that she had gotten that as part of her research for the article but that of course she hadn't had time to do more than skim it. Again when other books were mentioned, she knew of them but never expected to have time to read them. The excitement faded from Joanna's eyes; for her a life without time to read was no life at all.

This spring I spent time with my sister and she talked much about her son's Scouting activities, about merit badges and opportunities to earn them at summer camps and the national Scout jamboree. She was annoyed that some parents let their kids earn badges without doing the work, and she spoke of the intense competition to have the most or get to Eagle Scout earliest. Many of the things her son was doing to earn the badges were things my children do just because they are interested. I couldn't understand the emphasis or the importance of the badges, and she wasn't much interested in things we were doing that earned no badges.

So many of the studies and such about homeschooling show how it is a better way to reach traditional goals of success and achievement. What I have been coming to realize lately is that my children have a different idea of where they want to go, of what is worth doing. They are not running in the same race as the reporter or their Boy Scout cousin. They don't even realize there is a race going on. Perhaps that is why people say we don't live in the real world, but it is very real to us. And while we aren't in the race, there are challenges in our world too – but not only one winner. *– Lorraine Hoyt (ME)*

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I'VE BEEN HOMESCHOOLING for nine years; I'm 15 now. By homeschooling, I have learned to be more open and to take it all in. I like to look at all different sides of an issue and I like to philosophize about things. I go on the high school forum on the internet and I post my thoughts and ideas about religion or about different issues in society today. I also write stories, and I'm writing a story right now that kind of shares my feelings on a variety of things.

I volunteer at a hands-on museum and at the local library. I really like doing this; I like seeing how a business works and trying to understand it.

– Luke Rolka (MI)

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I'M 13 AND have been homeschooled my whole life. Often someone asks me, "Who teaches you?" What

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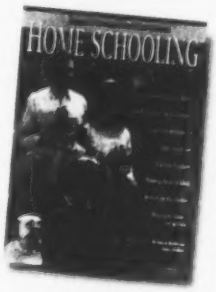

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I want the public to know is that I teach myself. People think that I'm a genius when I say that, but anyone can do it. It doesn't mean I do it all by myself. Other people help me understand things. When I need help with Saxon Algebra, my dad helps me. When I was 7, I wanted to play the violin, so my mom got me a Suzuki violin teacher. It was up to me to learn it and to practice. I'm still playing the violin now, and since I'm homeschooled, I have more time to do this and I can make my own schedule.

Different people learn at different rates. If I were in school, I would have difficulty in reading and writing. I still learn those things, but at a slower rate. *– Emily Rolka (MI)*

•••

Instead of pouring my efforts into school's writing assignments, I can choose what I want to write and when I want to write it. I also have a great deal more energy for the project than if I were trying to squeeze it in between algebra homework and studying for tomorrow's quiz. Instead of having science class every afternoon at 1:00, I'm free to sketch wildflowers or birds, try to build a working ferris wheel with my younger brother, take walks and observe nature, or do messy experiments in the kitchen with the rest of my family. Instead of feeling pressured to be a part of the "in crowd," I can be myself and feel good about it, too. Instead of socializing only with other high school juniors, I can have friends and acquaintances of all ages. I can have fun entertaining a 5-year-old whose family is visiting mine, I can work alongside the secretary at my church, and I can go to the movies with friends my own age. Homeschooling doesn't mean that I go to school at home and then live my life in the left-over time. It is truly a way of life in itself, and I'm eternally grateful that it is my way of life. *– Dori Griffin of Tennessee*

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Homeschooling has been such an integral part of our lives for the past 15 years that I have taken it for granted, rarely giving any thought to public schools or to the fact that our three daughters (now ages 20, 16, and 14) could have attended. Rural isolation is part of this. We live off the blacktop at the end of a dirt road approximately 20 miles from town, so we don't see the school bus drive past every day. If our daughters had attended school, they would have spent 2 1/2 to 3 hours a day on the school bus (this is about the same amount of time that we have devoted to "schoolwork" in the course of a day). Looking back, I'm so glad that they didn't have to get up so early every day and spend all that time on the bus. My middle daughter, especially, always needed a lot of sleep and I think she would have been far less healthy if she had had to keep to school hours.

When we first started homeschooling, we didn't know of anyone in the entire state who was doing it. We felt very isolated; so isolated, in fact, that we put our eldest daughter, Sonnet, in school when she was 9. She attended for three years and then decided to homeschool again. By the time her younger sisters started homeschooling, there was a support group in our area with kids their ages.

Over the years I have taken any opportunity to mention homeschooling (much to my daughters' embarrassment). For instance, while checking out at Wal-Mart with a globe and a world map, I would mention that I was going to be using these items in our homeschooling. Once, at a homeschooling fair, I mentioned that I didn't know why I was always trying to promote homeschooling, that I didn't know if such efforts did any good. A woman turned to me and said that it does help, that the first time she had ever heard of homeschooling was at the checkout counter at Wal-Mart! She went on to say that homeschooling had made such a positive difference in her children's lives.

Self-reliance has always been a big part of our homeschooling. We have insisted that our daughters do their share of the family work, which includes gardening, preserving food, cooking, housecleaning, loading and stacking firewood, clearing brush, painting, lawn mowing, taking care of our pets, and helping on construction projects. They have their own money to manage. If they need information, they make their own telephone calls (sometimes we do a role play in

advance to practice).

Last summer, when our two younger daughters returned home from a week-long mission trip to Kentucky where they did maintenance work at a Christian Home, the adult leaders were effusive in their praise. Naomi was praised for her cooking skills and for her ability to take charge and direct clean-up. Eva was praised for her hardworking attitude; as soon as she finished one job, she asked for another to do.

Our oldest, Sonnet, had a very smooth transition from home. When she was 17, she and a homeschooling pen-pal traveled to New England for six weeks in Sonnet's van. When she was 18, she spent 6 1/2 months in Europe traveling on her own, visiting a few pen-pals and homeschoolers along the way. At 19 she moved to Kansas City where she worked for over a year as a line cook at a vegetarian restaurant. Now she is in California working as a volunteer with the Student Conservation Association.

The self-reliance skills we were able to teach as part of homeschooling have paid off, and I have discovered that when your children grow up and leave home, you don't regret that you never got to spend time with them or that you never got to know them. Instead, homeschooling leaves you with beautiful memories and a feeling of family closeness. – *Jan Pierce (MO)*

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Laboratory science was an area of study that I thought I would pursue as a profession because of my strong interest in biology. I immersed myself in science by taking on a seven-month internship at an aquatic pathobiology lab. I learned a tremendous amount about science and about myself in that environment. The most important thing I learned was that I did not want to embark on a career that would have me working in a lab. Through many experiences such as this one, I began, in homeschooling, to know who I was and where I fit into the world.

There is a sweet satisfaction in knowing that I really don't have to worry about myself or about what's going to happen next because I remember to take responsibility for myself. I know that even in the most confusing times of my life, I will make the best decisions for myself. I will choose to follow what I love. I believe that homeschooling is a way of thinking and being: I have the desire and ability to take charge of my life.

– *Crimson Barocca of Maryland*

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Last year a parent and part-time professor in our local homeschool support group started a philosophy group for homeschooled adolescents. Each week we met and read a poem, talked over the issues it raised, and then watched a film and discussed it as well. He asked us all for our opinions first and then told us what he thought about the subject. I remember his surprise when, after watching a dramatic production of the trial of Socrates, I said I thought Socrates was motivated by pride as well as love of the truth. He said, "But wait! Have you considered..." and cited several episodes from the film and from Plato's writings to prove that Socrates was humble. I listened and then countered with episodes to back my point of view, and the rest of the group members joined in enthusiastically on both sides. The professor didn't seem offended, but he said he wasn't used to having students challenge his point of view. Later on, another member said that one of the rules for our discussions seemed counterproductive. In the end the professor asked us to make our own set of rules for the group, which we haggled over, compromised on, and finally passed by consensus and adhered to.

I thought that it was normal to express one's own point of view courteously and forcefully and to make decisions by debate and consensus, but gradually I realized how privileged I was to be part of this kind of group. Each week before going to the group's meetings I spent a couple of hours at the college where my father teaches, reading in the library, writing in the computer lab, and getting help with calculus from a professor of mathematics. I looked old enough to be a student, and on several occasions when I was sitting in the halls looking through my calculus book or reading something from the college library that piqued my interest, students asked me, "Who made you read that book? It looks wicked tough!" I also

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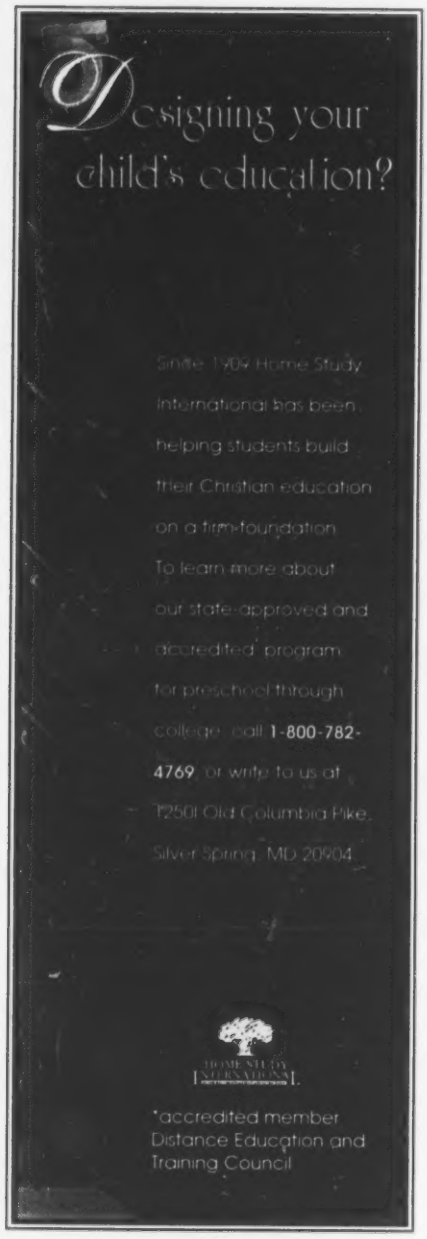
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overheard conversations between students discussing which teachers were "nice" ("He just passes you, whatever you do"), which ones were "mean" ("Like he expects you to know everything he tells you"), and how to get around tests and teachers ("If you're really up on the diabetes stuff, she'll let you off the hook on the rest of it"). The professors were seen as all-powerful beings to be evaded as much as possible. I was taken aback. I had thought that the purpose of colleges was to foster intellectual curiosity and to bring people with common interests together to debate – in short, I had imagined it to be an extended version of the Philosophy group, but with the annoying addition of grades. Instead, I found myself appreciating the freedom of homeschooling all the more.

This isn't to say that homeschooling takes away all respect for authority. Being willing to challenge authority carries obligations with it. If I want to be carefully listened to, I must listen to those who disagree with me. If I want freedom to challenge the rules, I must then obey the rules which are agreed upon. Then I have the freedom to hold my own on any position that matters to me. – *Joanna Hoyt (ME)*

•••

My family makes leather shoes, and we go to craft shows around the United States. We also make other leather products, like stools, pouches, credit card holders, and checkbook covers. I have a stool in the Philadelphia Museum of Art Craft Shop. I made the stool out of leather. I was so surprised that at 10 years old I got some of my artwork into a very well known museum.

Homeschooling is about growing and learning every day, not sitting at a desk waiting for a teacher to say something you don't already know.
– *Autumn Wright (WV)*

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When I was in public school, I did not learn well because the teachers were too stern and there was a lot of pressure put on me. I needed help to spell simple words and I could not read. It was my older brother who taught me to read, before I went to public school. I kept the book he taught me with until I was 8.

When I was 7, we moved in with my new dad, Mik. From then on I was homeschooled (I'm 9 now). In my first homeschooling year I read *The Call of the Wild* by Jack London. It was a difficult book and I felt good that I could read it. – *Leila Wright (WV)*

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The most difficult aspect of homeschooling for me is letting go of my conditioning about what schooling is. But I am finally beginning to free my mind of old patterns and ideas and to see that my children are educated by life. I think of the opportunities we have had to swim with the manatees in Florida. I can't find the words to describe the joy I felt watching my children dance and play with these magnificent, gentle creatures. These experiences have given them far greater understanding about this animal than any video or book could ever do.

Then I think of Autumn, age 10, fascinated by the immense variety of wildflowers that surround us. Armed with a flower identification book, she goes off into the woods. She is learning how to look at flowers with the discerning eye of a scientist while being able to enjoy the scent and beauty of each individual flower in its natural environment. I think of Leila, age 9, wanting to join a club, taking her money to the bank and purchasing a money order for the membership fee. I am often moved to tears watching my children in their freedom. When I am confronted again with that old conditioning, I only need to remember the joy in their eyes when they have experienced knowledge and understanding inspired by their own curiosity.
– *Barbara Ann Volk (WV)* ◆

How Other Educational Innovators View Homeschooling

Over the years GWS has interviewed many innovative thinkers in education so that our readers could learn from their work. For this anniversary issue, we asked some of our past interviewees to tell us what they had learned from homeschooling.

We interviewed Glenda Bissex, author of *GNYS AT WORK: A Child Learns to Write and Read*, in GWS #79. She talked about the experience of observing and studying her own child's writing development, about how children develop their own theories as they learn, and about how adults can respond helpfully to children's writing. Now she writes:

There are probably as many different homeschooling experiences as there are homeschoolers – differences to be celebrated in a society that tends to view education as a mass production system. Within this system, insights and understandings about children that observers and thinkers such as Piaget *describe* too often become translated into stages that schools *prescribe* and thus unnecessarily attempt to teach. Even invented spelling has suffered this fate, so I'm happy that parents enjoy reading my book *GNYS AT WRK: A Child Learns to Write and Read* for the insights it gives them into their children's learning, not as a curriculum to impose.

In *The Chalice and the Blade*, Riane Eisler describes two patterns of social organization: the dominator model and the partnership model. Her book is inspiring because she presents evidence that thousands of years ago, human societies were predominantly organized as partnerships. Thus we can see a peaceful, cooperative, and life-enhancing society as not just a dream but as a reality we can attain again. Growing Without Schooling is a partnership model of education, realized in diverse ways. Those of us – teachers, parents, and learners – who struggle against the dominator model within our educational institutions, as well as within ourselves, need GWS's help in keeping alive our vision and finding our ways.

We interviewed Thomas Armstrong in GWS #114 about his most recent book, *The Myth of the A.D.D. Child*. He discussed the problems with the Attention-Deficit Disorder label and described some effective strategies for helping such kids. Now he writes:

I have a soft spot in my heart for GWS because it was one of the very first publications I wrote for back in the early 1980s when I started sharing my feelings, as a former special education teacher, that the "learning disability" label was itself a disability to kids having trouble with school. I can't tell you how gratifying it was for me to see that GWS thought enough of my words to be willing to put them into print. Even more rewarding was the feedback I got from GWS parents who wrote to me sharing stories of how they'd pulled their LD-labeled kids from frustrating special education programs and homeschooled them, and how their lives had turned around as a result. This feedback (along with encouragement from John Holt, with whom I was fortunate enough to have had intermittent contact during the ten years preceding his death) was instrumental in my putting together the book *In Their Own Way*. I am grateful to GWS (and to John wherever you are) for supporting me in those early stages of writing.

Since that time, I've continued to take an interest in the homeschooling movement. I must say that over the past ten years, my image of homeschooling has become more complex, due in large part to the widely varying motives that propel people to teach their kids at home. Where once I saw homeschooling as a kind of unvarying shining light, I now see it more as a tool that can be used either to coerce children far more effectively than the public schools *or* to liberate kids from the incredible ineptitude of the worst aspects of formal schooling. Naturally (and without any feigned attempt at "kissing up"), I associate GWS with the latter impulse. GWS has always embodied for me feelings and principles about learning that are deeply transformative in how we envision what society could be if it were populated by citizens who were self-motivated learners instead of pellet-driven rodent-like beings. I congratulate it on its 20th anniversary and I wish it much continued success in its next 20 years!

We interviewed Kendall Hailey, author of *The Day I Became an Autodidact*, in GWS #80. She talked about why she had decided to forego college in favor of reading, writing, and otherwise educating herself independently.

When I first came in contact with *Growing Without Schooling*, I was looking at homeschooling from the child's point of view, desperately wishing that my homeschooling experience had begun not with self-directed learning after high school in lieu of college but from kindergarten on.

Now, with parenthood a prospect hopefully before GWS's 30th anniversary, I am starting to look at homeschooling from the parent's point of view, and

hoping to incorporate my earlier child's point of view into a parent's perspective. What I think every parent learns from homeschoolers is that homeschooling should be a part of every child's life even if "school-schooling" is, too. Even if a parent cannot make the commitment to full-time homeschooling (as my proximity to parenthood increases, I become more and more in awe of the parents who do), all parents must remember that they are their child's first and best teacher always. That is what homeschoolers have to teach us all.

We interviewed Frank Smith, author of *Insult to Intelligence*, *Reading Without Nonsense*, and other books, in GWS #108. He talked about the fact that school is based on a false theory of learning, about what teachers can do to make changes in that context, and about what homeschoolers can offer.

Education is widely debated in terms of content, methods, and materials, embedded in a formal curriculum and assured by testing. I don't believe that any of these observable and manipulable factors is central to learning. Rather, I see learning as the growth of experience, which is not so much the acquisition of knowledge and skills as the development of one's own self. Learning is a social activity.

To me, the most important aspects of learning are the relationships between learners and the people they learn from – teachers in the broadest sense of the word – who show what people can do, why they do it, and what they feel about doing it. In other words, they provide examples and facilitate learning.

Homeschooling and community schooling have always been of great interest to me because of the alternatives they offer to the formalized, detached, and hierarchical structures of many conventional school systems, whether public or private. Alternative approaches have the possibility of making learning meaningful and attainable when they demonstrate the virtues of compassion, equality, respect, and democracy, through collaboration rather than competition, encouragement rather than coercion.

I can't say that all homeschooling is good or all conventional schooling is bad. But anything that strives to avoid the rigidity and uniformity of formal education deserves both attention and encouragement.

We interviewed Alison Stallibrass, author of *The Self-Respecting Child* and *Being Me and Also Us*, in GWS #72. In that interview, she talked about the importance of play, about the Pioneer Health Center (a great example of a community center for families), and about how important it is for children to feel that they have power over their surroundings – that they can make things happen.

The few young people I have known who have grown up in homeschooling families have seemed to me to be mature for their age and quietly and serenely confident. Some from age 10 or 12 onwards have chosen to enroll in school, but by then they possessed a secure foundation of the experience of successfully learning what they wanted to learn and have also developed a number of their potential human and individual abilities. This will likely give them a healthy self-esteem and joy in life. As the psychotherapist M. Scott Peck has pointed out in *The Road Less Travelled*, these two gifts are the twin pillars of emotional, mental, and psychological health. So, although I have had little chance to observe homeschooling in practice, I believe in the theory of it.

Anthropologists and psychologists *of sense* know that human babies, like the young of other creatures, have, from birth, an instinct to do what they need to do at any moment in order to grow – that is, to go a little further along the road to becoming effective members of their species. Babies recognize the bits of nourishment they need as long as these are present in their surroundings, and what we adults have to do is ensure that they are present. That was easy for parents to do in early human communities; not so now. In fact, in the social conditions that exist today, if we are ignorant of the needs of very young children, it can happen that they begin to lose the ability to recognize the nourishment they need, because for so long it is not there. They lose their appetite for the knowledge of things and people and their own powers. But children who have retained the power they had at birth to recognize their present learning needs and what will satisfy them will, it seems to me, be successful at directing their own learning.

We interviewed Grace Llewellyn in GWS #84, when she had just published *The Teenage Liberation Handbook*. Since then, she has published *Real Lives: 11 Teenagers Who Don't Go to School* and *Freedom Challenge: African American Homeschoolers*, and she no longer even remotely qualifies as someone *outside* the homeschooling movement. Nonetheless, we include her thoughts in this section because she reflects here on the experience of reading GWS *before* she had entered the homeschooling community.

Sometimes it's hard to remember how I thought – about *anything* – before I discovered John Holt and GWS. A few large, troubling questions about education and childraising crawled just under the surface of my consciousness, but the only way I knew even to begin to articulate those questions was to slide into the belly of the beast and become a schoolteacher. My first year, during which I substitute taught in the public schools of Oakland, California, was full of chaos, confusion, and disillusionment.

One winter day I was teaching high school band. I was 22 years old and often mistaken for a teenager. The heat wasn't working in the building, so I wore a wool hat. My students, huddling in sweaters and scarves, warned me that wearing a hat was against the school rules. Amused by the rigidity of their thinking, I explained – with a hint of condescension, I'm afraid – that in unusual circumstances, everday rules didn't always apply, and that one should simply use common sense and think independently. "The

rule was not meant to prevent us from staying warm when the furnace breaks down," I said.

I left my hat on. I conducted, they played their horns and flutes. The drummers showed signs of mutiny so I went to stand by them. They settled down and the band played on while I continued to stand in the percussion section rather than at the front of the class. The vice-principal chose that moment to check on the new substitute. He stuck his head in the door, saw no adult at the front of the room, and his eyes widened in panic while the music persevered brightly. His gaze swept the room and landed on me. "Take off that hat!" he yelled, pointing. My belly lurched in my throat and I whipped the hat off my head, unable to breathe. The song crashed into silence and the class ripped into laughter. "I told her, Mr. Watson," said several boys. "I *told* her she couldn't wear no hat in this school." The vice-principal, still dazed, left the room, and as my brain began to unpuzzle the situation, I realized what had happened and that he had probably gone in search of the substitute teacher who had abandoned her class. Hours later, during my lunch break, he reappeared, red-faced, having realized his mistake. "I'm so sorry," he told me. "I thought you were a student."

That was one of my first overwhelming moments of truth. Why would it have been OK for him to yell at a *student* who had decided to take care of herself by breaking a petty rule in an unusual circumstance? Why, if I had been exactly the same person but four years younger, would he *not* have apologized?

Soon after, I started looking for help, and it wasn't long before a few chapters of John Holt's *Instead of Education* changed my mind forever. Soon I had read most of his books and wept and raged over the 17 years I had pretty much lost to schools.

Still, I wasn't brave enough to quit teaching at that point: I didn't know what else to do. I found a position at a tiny private school and kept trying to tell myself how fortunate I was. After a year and a half of testing John's ideas and finding him undeniably correct over and over again, I finally caught my eyes in the mirror and knew I had to quit. And then I was suddenly at peace, and ready to learn about what had become of John Holt's ideas. I subscribed to GWS, ordered all the back issues, and read each one. The brave pioneering homeschoolers whose stories packed the magazine became my heroes, my trailblazers, my lighthouses. I read example after example of how people invented and uncovered opportunities that allowed them to contribute something to the world and also to learn more about things that interested them. I quit school (teaching), got on with my life, began writing instead of trying to teach how to write, renewed old interests and discovered new ones. In a very deep way, I reconnected with the joy of living.

I'm so happy that I've been able to return the favor to the homeschooling community, a little bit anyway, by writing and editing books about self-directed learning. I didn't intend to write for homeschoolers, but rather for teenagers and others who had never heard about the possibility of self-directed learning. I filled my first book, *The Teenage Liberation Handbook*, with quotes from GWS and quotes from kids I'd contacted through GWS. So of course I've been completely thrilled to hear from long-time homeschoolers (and GWS readers) – as well as from schooled teenagers and new homeschooling families – that my work has helped. "The gift must keep moving," I read somewhere. Let's keep it moving – throughout the world, through imaginary class and economic barriers to self-directed learning, through supposed age and "motivation" and career-preparation barriers. And let's be sure to move it on the material plane, too, by giving gift subscriptions to GWS – to new parents, grumpy in-laws, inner-city librarians, angry teenagers, and to confused, idealistic school-teachers, like me. ◆

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Carolyn M. Mamedi, Associate Director, Center for the Study of Children's Literature, Simmons College, Boston, MA

Watching The Grassroots Grow

Reflections on the Homeschooling Movement

The Courage to Go Public

Manfred Smith, who runs the Maryland Home Education Association, has written to GWS about art, storytelling, legislative issues, and, most recently, about why some fathers resist homeschooling.

In 1978 I discovered an article by John Holt about homeschooling, and my life was never to be the same again. Although I was a public school teacher (and have remained one), I knew immediately that we would homeschool our children. I began to correspond with John and by 1980 had formed the Maryland Homeschool Association. Three families met one chilly February Saturday at my home. None of us had school-age children yet, but we knew we wanted to educate them at home. Membership in MHEA grew steadily over the next two years through word of mouth and through my speaking at La Leche League conferences.

MHEA went public in 1981 when I decided to respond to a sarcastic article in the *Washington Post* that ridiculed a local minister's efforts to create his own home academy. My letter in support of his homeschooling was published, the media "discovered" homeschooling in Maryland, and calls from reporters began to trickle in. When, a year later, MHEA threw its support behind a homeschooling mother who was resist-ing her school system's efforts to cower her into submission and return her children to school, homeschooling began to get wider, and more supportive, coverage. It was then that the press discovered I was a public school teach-er who also intended to homeschool his child (my oldest was then 4). This focused more attention on MHEA and my role in it.

In 1983, one school district decided they would end this homeschooling nonsense once and for all, and they took a family to court for truancy, ignoring the mother's obvious success at homeschooling, using the Calvert curriculum, for the previous year. MHEA organized the legal defense. We were immensely fortunate to have homeschooling father Ray Fidler as the family's lawyer. The trial lasted two days and the defense proved that the mother was in full compliance with the law and that anyone could homeschool in Maryland as long as they provided regular and thorough instruction to their children.

The trial created a lot of media coverage and I found myself interviewed on radio and television. Suddenly it seemed as if all of Maryland had heard about Manfred Smith, the public school teacher who was advocating teaching his children at home! The Miller family's trial was over, but I was to face a trial of my own the following Monday.

I consider myself a reasonably courageous individual. There are acts of courage throughout my life of which I am proud. Returning to my job as a teacher following the Miller trial and its surrounding publicity was one of the most difficult things I have ever experienced. Clusters of teachers gathered in the hallways and ceased talking as I walked by, staring after me instead. No one spoke about the news, but it was obvious that everyone knew. They weren't openly hostile, but their disappoval was palpable. I swallowed down a rising panic and forced myself to keep walking. This was not some demonstration where a whole lot of folks were there to support each other. I was alone, and I was afraid.

It was over within a matter of minutes; I found my way to my classroom. From then on it was easier. Eventually my colleagues and administrators began to question me about what I was doing. I discovered that although many simply wrote off the entire event as another crazy Manfred thing (I was already known for my unorthodox classroom practices), a small number supported my stance. Today, most of my colleagues support homeschooling and teachers or former teachers make up a significant percentage of homeschooling parents nationwide. But back in 1983 I was considered a traitor and I believed I might be fired. When doom did not befall me in the next few weeks, I decided that my best protection was public exposure, and I accepted every offer to appear on television, radio, and in the press. This created a stream of exposure for homeschooling over the years, which got word out to a wide audience in Maryland and helped to accelerate the public's acceptance of homeschooling.

New regulations in 1986, which Ray Fidler, I, and others had a hand in creating, opened new options for homeschoolers in Maryland. Parents could be reviewed by the schools, enroll with an approved correspondence course, or enroll in a satellite school and be out from state supervision altogether. In response to this, I was instrumental in helping to create a non-denominational satellite program, The Learning Community. TLC is one of many satellite programs now operating in Maryland; we are unique in that our mission is to support a totally individualized educational program. We are an unschooling program that serves families in several states and a number of foreign countries.

MHEA is now celebrating its 17th anniversary. We field an increasing number of calls and letters from people looking for alternatives to school. We help people network, publish a newsletter, organize yearly conferences, provide a co-op book-buying service, monitor the state for any pending legislation that may affect homeschoolers, and lots more.

I am proud to have had the opportunity to help homeschooling

grow. Our oldest, Jamie, is 20 now and a junior at a local college. Majoring in English and Journalism, she is currently a paid intern at *The Baltimore Sun*. She plans to get married next year, so our future will be enriched further. Jesse, 16, is our computer expert. He's the one who can figure out anything that ails our equipment. He's very interested in graphic arts and creates wonderful artwork both on and off the computer. Darcy, 10, is our dynamo. He's very active, loves to play games, has a great imagination, and makes friends easily. Through watching my children and through my work with MHEA, I have learned an awful lot about how children learn. I have learned that, as parents, we must stay involved with our children, that we need to offer them guidance and can't simply buy into any program (even "unschooling") and think that the rest will take care of itself. I have learned that we can change direction or attitudes when they are not serving us well. I have learned that we must always remember to hug our children and tell them how much we love them, no matter how old they may be – and I have learned that they are never too old to appreciate being hugged and hearing that they are loved. I am looking forward to seeing what the next 20 years of living and learning will bring.

Decide What You Need to Do

Mary Griffith is the author of The Homeschool Handbook *and editor of* California Homeschooler, *the newsletter of the Homeschool Association of California:*

When I think back on what I've learned from being involved with a state homeschooling organization, I think of the weekend in early 1992 when 20 board members and other volunteers with what was then the Northern California Homeschool Association gathered for a long-range planning retreat to try to clarify the group's purpose and goals and to develop plans for reaching those goals. We all were knocked speechless (if only temporarily!) by a concept presented by Diane Brown, a professional non-profit consultant who was our facilitator that weekend. We were doing things backward, she said. Instead of bemoaning our tiny membership and our chronic lack of funds, and looking at all the things we couldn't do because they were too expensive, too involved, or too difficult, we should first determine what we need to do and only then figure out how. If the goal is important to us, Diane told us, we can find a way to do it.

That evening after dinner, a bunch of us sat around fantasizing about the perfect homeschooling conference we could produce, if we only had the money and energy to pull it off. We thought big – made it a two-day conference and imagined getting Micki and David Colfax, Susannah Sheffer, Grace Llewellyn, and John Taylor Gatto all to speak. Apparently, Diane's advice was good: three months later, nearly 1,000 adults and children showed up for NCHA's "Families Learning Together" conference, featuring, somewhat to our surprise, exactly the speakers we had imagined.

Within 18 months of that planning retreat, we had doubled our membership, acquired a committee of legislative volunteers (including a professional lobbyist), and become the Homeschool Association of California. And it all came from a little shift in perspective essential for grassroots organizations: decide what you need to do and *then* figure out a way to do it!

Let's Refocus Our Attention

Susan Evans, contact person for the National Homeschool Association, has written in GWS about such topics as helping late readers.

I started subscribing to GWS in 1982. My son Luke was 4, Jesse was 2, and Margaret was newborn. Next to La Leche League's books, articles, and support group meetings, John Holt's writing was instrumental in helping me sort out what kind of parent I wanted to be and how to find the courage and strength to be that parent.

The mothers and fathers who wrote to John Holt early on seemed to take for granted that children were smart, curious about the world, hard-working, and in no danger of being ignorant, if only they could be spared the tedium and cruelty of the schoolroom. These parents focused on finding information and developing strategies to get around the compulsory attendance laws in their states and to avoid conflicts with their local district.

In contrast, today when I read letters written to homeschooling organizations, answer questions at homeschooling workshops I'm offering, or listen to the conversations at support group meetings and conferences, I'm most struck by how little of that confidence seems to be available to parents. I wonder at the absence of delight in the wonderful ways of children and how often, instead, people watch to see how other families homeschool, either to emulate them or to chastise them.

It seems to me that when John started GWS, no one wasted much time questioning whether their children could grasp the exhilarating, confusing issues involved in becoming educated people. Early letters to GWS instead chronicled parents' fascination and delight at observing their children's intellectual conquests, tried to describe and embrace the processes children used, and shared these amazing delights with other grown-ups who cared about children.

Whole industries have since been built by focusing parents' energies on choosing (and paying lots of money for) curriculum materials and on monitoring, testifying on, and lobbying for laws affecting homeschooling and often other peripheral issues. It seems to me that these activities take away from, or even prevent, intense, energetic hours spent investigating the world and working on messy, loud – or quiet, purposeful – projects. From reading many current homeschooling newsletters, it seems as if we should all be busy arranging for annual standardized tests, lobbying to play on organized NCAA-compliant sports teams, and writing to our state or federal capital cities to arrange lobbying visits with our favorite (or loathsome) legislators. In between, we must make sure that the beds are made, the dishes are done, the chore charts are made up,

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carried out, stickered, and carefully saved for the end-of-the-year portolios.

I don't actually think that homeschooling families have changed much over the years. I don't think the most important issues have changed much, either. What has changed are the audible conversations: the din of the lawyers, the marketers, the researchers, those inside and outside the homeschooling community who are bent on rounding up, counting, labeling, and assessing the families. But what *hasn't* changed – I doubt it ever will, and I pray it never will – is the fascination a young child holds for a loving adult. New parents throughout time have been awestruck by the miracle of a new baby in the family. Parents of young children are rock solid in their belief that no child has taken first steps or spoken first words as amazingly as theirs. Seeing a child figure out the secret of reading and writing restores a person's faith in human beings' ability to seek out and solve the mysteries of the universe.

Most of our children are patient teachers. They're willing to help us learn how to be good parents, if only we'll turn down that darn music, pay attention, and apply ourselves. Before there were so many how-to books, conferences, workshops, and, yes, articles, parents had to rely on their children to educate them. How did Jean Piaget, Maria Montessori, or John Holt learn so much about how children learn? The children taught them, and they were sharp enough to pay attention. Let's re-focus our attention and slow down our frantic lives so that we can attend to the heart of the homeschooling community – our competent, capable, and oh-so-patient children.

No Need to Compare

Pat Montgomery founded Clonlara School in 1967 and began helping homeschoolers, through the Clonlara Home Based Education Program, twelve years later. She has written often in GWS about Clonlara's activities, legislative news, and, most recently, her efforts to help "school refusers" in Japan.

John Holt was the keynote speaker at our April, 1985 Ann Arbor conference, one of the last conferences he ever addressed. It was a combination of two annual conferences: the National Coalition of Alternative Community Schools and the Clonlara School Home Based Education Program. Participants were, therefore, alternative school teachers and parents and students engaged in home education.

For homeschoolers, it was still "look over your shoulder" time. School officials were, more often than not, hostile; their urge to regulate was percolating. State Department of Education bureaucrats were watching court cases spring up here and there and keeping track of them with an eye toward future legislation. Most parents were new to this age-old practice of teaching your own.

John opened his talk by commenting that if he were at a gathering where discussions were dedicated to "Breathing, How to" and "Maintaining Successful Breathing" he would be led to conclude that those assembled had breathing problems. We understood that he was pointing out something about a conference with so many sessions focusing on education and learning. In a way, the fact that we needed to have sessions focusing on the legality of homeschooling and the contrast between it and institutional, government schools only showed how nervous and unsure most homeschoolers were. We were especially worried about how the education establishment would monitor and judge us.

Nowadays, the words and inspiration that John continually provided dance around the edge of my consciousness throughout each annual Clonlara conference. The conference is a three-day affair, and a highlight is the graduation ceremony. As I watch the parade of graduates from my perch on the stage, I can't help but marvel at the distance homeschoolers have come from those early days. John would be proud!

The graduation ceremony reflects Clonlara's style. There are no uniform caps and gowns, "Pomp and Circumstance" doesn't play, the diploma is not handed to the graduate by a Clonlara School representative, and there is no commencement speaker, per se. Instead, graduates come to the ceremony in whatever garb they choose. They sit amongst their parents, relatives, and friends anywhere in the auditorium. Each one designates the relative and/or friend who will accept the diploma on stage and present it to the graduate. The microphone is open to the graduate and accompanying person to share whatever they wish with the audience.

Joanne, age 18, a Canadian, had immersed herself in her love of Canadian history from the perspective of culinary arts. She served as a member of the Volunteer Historic Cooking Group with the Toronto Historical Board; she launched their first newsletter. At the microphone, she joyfully announced that she had been accepted to Mount Holyoke college.

Ryan, age 17, was interested in mechanics from as far back as he could remember. Homeschooled since age 10, as part of that experience he attended vocational school, and through it he did an apprenticeship with a General Motors dealership. He serves on the Youth Board of GM and is now certified in all areas of GM service.

Victoria, age 17, and her father, who was born in Nigeria, wore Nigerian clothing to the ceremony. Victoria recounted her depression in traditional schools. Her father explained that due to the pressures of school she had threatened suicide and was hospitalized. Their late-found alternative, homeschooling, literally saved Victoria's life.

Eric, age 18, proudly stated that he is employed in a home for the mentally handicapped where he had volunteered during his later homeschooling years. His mother explained that, had Eric attended conventional schools, he would have been placed in special education classes and would most certainly have been a patient in the institution where he now works, instead of the independent, capable man he is.

Edward, age 17, marched across the stage in military cadence. He wore the blue and grey cavalry uniform of a "buffalo soldier." His great-grandfather was a Civil War soldier who, with other black men, went west following the war and earned that title. Edward is now a re-enactor in historical pageants.

Joan, age 17, accepted her Clon-

lara diploma alongside her mother, Edith, age 39, who received hers, as well. Edith had dropped out of school in ninth grade. They have been partners together in a home business – housecleaning and repairs – for the past two years and are looking forward to having more employees.

There they are: individuals all, these young people and the others who graduated that day. No cookie-cutter students here!

More and more, parents and students do not have to make comparisons between home education and institutional schooling. They enjoy the legacy of freethinking pioneers brave enough and visionary enough to break ranks with those who went along with the status quo even though it was so grossly inadequate.

I give thanks to John Holt, among the first to advocate teaching your own. He'd be pleased to meet these graduates who have grown without schooling and who no longer have to concentrate on the ills of schools, involved as they are in living and learning all the time.

Uncomfortable with the H-Word

Aaron Falbel interviewed Ivan Illich for GWS and has written throughout the years about school math vs. real math, learning vs. education, and other subjects.

I was fortunate enough to meet John Holt in the summer of 1984, during the last year of his life. I came across his books quite by accident, while doing some research in the wake of the report, "A Nation at Risk." ("Go find out what's really wrong with the schools," a professor told me.) An acquaintance of mine, who was a homeschooling parent, told me that John Holt was quite accessible to anyone who took his ideas seriously. I worked my way through all his books, became excited by the clarity, boldness, and sensibility of his thought, and arranged a meeting. We soon became good friends and would meet once a month or so for wonderful, wide-ranging conversations.

Through spending time at the Holt Associates office, I became fascinated by the idea of growing without schooling. I subscribed to the magazine even though I was not a parent. John's ideas eventually led me to the writing and thought of Ivan Illich, which occupies me to this day, but that's another story.

Because of my interest in Holt's ideas (and especially when I have to explain what my wife Susannah Sheffer does for a living), I have had many opportunities to explain homeschooling to various friends, relatives, and others. Over the years, I have observed that the greatest obstacle to understanding the idea has been the word "homeschooling" itself. Try as I might to explain that homeschoolers are not locked up at home, that their parents are not their only teachers, that they do not need a curriculum, that they do interact with their peers as well as with people of all ages, and so on and so forth, the word homeschooling somehow sticks in people's brains and conjures up all the wrong images. No amount of explanation or qualification seems to dislodge the school-at-home assumption.

Interestingly, John Holt did not start out using the H-word to describe what people did when they took their children out of school; he used the word "unschooling." In GWS #2 (Nov. 1977), he made the following distinction: "GWS will say 'unschooling' when we mean taking kids out of school, and 'deschooling' when we mean changing the laws to make schools non-compulsory and to take away from them their power to grade, rank, and label people, i.e. to make lasting, official, public judgments about them." For the next three years or so, John used the words "unschooling" and "unschoolers" to refer to the activity and the people doing it, respectively. Here and there, the term "home education" cropped up, but "unschooling" was the term used most often.

By the early 1980s, about the time *Teach Your Own* came out, the phrase "home schooling" started to appear more and more. I don't think John ever made a conscious decision about switching from "unschooling" to "home schooling" (though there is some evidence he had some misgivings about the change). The H-word simply

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caught on; it was beyond his control. By 1982, the term "unschooling" largely disappeared from the pages of GWS.

What's in a word? A lot, I think. I believe the H-word causes more confusion and erroneous assumptions than anything else. It is a misnomer as far as I'm concerned, and I lament its adoption. It will be hard to get rid of, though, even if we want to; the H-word is out there in the culture. But this doesn't mean that we shouldn't try other words and phrases on for size, to see what fits and what doesn't.

Some people object to the word "unschooling" because they think it sounds too negative. But I see this negativity as a positive feature. It brings to mind Illich's distinction between prescription and proscription, which Holt discussed in *Freedom & Beyond*. To prescribe what someone must do leaves them far less freedom of choice than proscribing what they must not do. So "unschooling," taken to mean *not schooling*, affords more freedom than "homeschooling," which too many understand to mean a type of *schooling* that takes place at *home*.

As GWS readers know, in the last few years, the word "unschooling" has made something of a comeback, though in a somewhat altered form. It now seems to mean the John Holt style or GWS style or no-curriculum style of homeschooling as distinguished from the school-at-home style. Though there may be times when such a distinction is useful, this use of "unschooling" strikes me as having too much of an Us vs. Them aspect to it. "After homeschooling for a few years, we decided to try unschooling" is the type of statement one hears nowadays. This use tries to turn unschooling into something specific – moving from proscription to prescription – which was not what John Holt intended when he coined the general-purpose term in GWS #2 and argued for adopting a spirit of inclusiveness in the movement. (See his article "Mixed Allies" in that issue.)

However, there are other problems with the word "unschooling," as I see it. It is by no means clear, at first glance, just what the word means. Does it mean closing down schools? Does it mean overcoming the damages done by school – detoxifying, so to speak? Does it mean doing the opposite of school – and what does *that* mean? Furthermore, "unschooling," like homeschooling, can be – and frequently is – used as a transitive verb, as in "We are unschooling our three children." I want to get away from the notion of doing things to children, acting on them in some way. John Holt similarly argued against doing things to people on the first page of *Instead of Education*, where he defined education as "something that some people do to others for their own good, molding and shaping them, and trying to make them learn what they think they ought to know." What unschooling ought to mean, I think, is clearing away the barriers and obstacles to learning and making the world more accessible and welcoming to young people. But nothing about the word "unschooling" suggests this.

So as an experiment, I am going to stop using the H-word, and I'm going to avoid "unschooling" as well. Personally, I feel the best descriptor is the name of the magazine itself: growing without schooling. John Holt got it exactly right twenty years ago when he emblazoned that phrase, using rub-on letters, atop his newly created newsletter. It is a bit cumbersome, perhaps, but it is crystal clear and says exactly what needs to be said: "No, my children are not in school; they are growing without schooling." The positive emphasis is on the "growing," the proscriptive aspect is in the "without schooling." The term applies to people of all ages. (I am in my mid-thirties, and I am certainly still growing without schooling.) I'd be interested in hearing from others who might want to join me in this experiment, if they too feel uncomfortable with the H-word.

Being Proactive, Not Reactive

Pat Farenga is the president of Holt Associates and publisher of GWS, and has written and spoken about many aspects of homeschooling in our pages and elsewhere.

I have been working at GWS for 16 of its 20 years, and it is hard for me to be in any way objective about this milestone. I certainly feel great pride in what I have done to keep GWS in print and Holt Associates in existence since John Holt's death in 1985; I seriously doubted if I could run the company for even a year or two after John died, and although I've made countless mistakes in the intervening years, I have learned from most of them and we are still around.

This pride is, however, tempered by the knowledge that I have paid a price for it: I have had to sacrifice much personal and family time to learn how to run and operate a small business, how to think, write, and speak publicly about homeschooling, how to deal with legislatures, school officials, and other authorities. Indeed, I'm still learning, but now my comfort with these topics and confidence about my abilities makes the task easier and more enjoyable than it was when I was first asked to speak in place of John Holt at a conference 12 years ago.

Because of my work at Holt Associates I have been able to convince my wife Day that homeschooling is a good thing for our three daughters. Tentative about homeschooling at first, Day now gives speeches and workshops about it! Further, Day's involvement in Holt Associates has helped expand the organization's work over the years, and she is a very vital part of the office. On the down side, though, we have sometimes made the classic mistake of spending too much time at work. It seemed easier to balance work and family when the kids were younger, because they were honored and pleased to come with us to the office, and that arrangement did suit us all for several years. But as the kids got older, they developed their own schedules and they needed to have time with us without office work being part of that time.

It took me longer to realize what was going on than it did Day, but eventually I, too, understood that changes needed to be made, and we are making them. Now we are learning how to rearrange our priorities to have more time with our girls, without any office work or office talk. We have weathered many a "new schedule" in our attempts to reconcile the demands of work with family life, only to discover that "the more things change,

the more they stay the same." So we accept that nothing we create is going to be *the* solution, and now, instead of just *reacting* to time pressures and family issues, we are learning to limit our time at work and to keep more of ourselves available for our home and community. We want to be proactive with our lives and family, not just reactive.

So after 16 years at GWS, I realize that I still have a lot to learn, and that's all right – no one can learn everything and we all have to learn at our own rate. The important thing is to learn and grow continually throughout our lives, which is what John Holt's work and all the writers to GWS frequently remind me.

I still marvel that such a diverse group of independent thinkers has managed to grow as much as it has: at conferences I'm hearing estimates of 1.5 to 2 million children being homeschooled today (in my opinion it's more like between 800,000 and a million). When John published the first issue of GWS, he had to make use of all sorts of alternative and emerging networks to find support for families who wanted to grow without schooling. Now there are national and state support groups and books by writers of all stripes and persuasions specifically to support homeschooling. However, such growth didn't come without a price, either.

The price, I think, is that we are now a movement, with all the political intrigues, ideological baggage, and monetary issues that come with any movement. But we are a special type of movement. I wonder how many people realize that homeschooling didn't start from a think tank, a ministry, or an individual leader. Instead, homeschooling survived in pockets throughout the world and then grew just as John Holt predicted it would in GWS #1: increasing one family at a time as families publicly shared their own examples of how to live and learn without schooling. John Gatto has noted that homeschooling is a leaderless movement, and GWS has always encouraged this "leaderless coalition" concept of the movement. In GWS #2, in a piece called "Mixed Allies," John recognized that people would homeschool for all sorts of different reasons and in all sorts of ways (including those not presented in or supported by GWS). He wrote, "What is important is not that all readers of GWS should agree on all these questions, but that we should respect our differences while we work for what we agree on, our right and the right of all people to take their children out of schools, and help, plan, or direct their learning in the ways they think best."

As GWS turns 20, I think we need to remember that our unique perspective on learning and living in society is vital but is hardly a complete answer for all families. Some families will never homeschool; others simply purchase a school curriculum and implement it at home; others will allow varying degrees of freedom for their children; some will want to work with local schools. The latter choice, in particular, seems to upset some homeschoolers who worry about homeschooling being co-opted by the schools. Certainly, this has happened in some districts, but it is hardly inevitable, since others have been able to work out creative and flexible arrangements that allow homeschoolers varying degrees of participation in local schools. Expanding school programs to include homeschooling doesn't happen to be my primary goal, since I'm more interested in creating alternatives to school, and I do agree that we must speak out if any such programs limit homeschooling. But it is possible for people to create such programs without infringing on others' right to homeschool in any way they want; I see no reason to oppose their efforts. And co-opting can work both ways: people who use schools' programs on their own terms are making schools more responsive to different learning and teaching styles and are challenging school's usual assumptions about teaching and learning.

Frankly, I'm more concerned about homeschooling being co-opted by those who want to link it publicly to their own political or religious beliefs – for instance, those who claim that homeschooling is the province and prime example of free markets, certain teaching methods, religious purity, anti-statism, left-wing radicalism, right-wing militias, or anything else that isn't actually central to the basic idea of letting children learn outside of school. Right now, homeschooling encompasses all these wings, but if any one dominates in the next few years – if homeschooling becomes just another plank in any group's platform – then all homeschoolers will suffer. Homeschooling is a good idea in and of itself, and we need to fight for all people to be able to do it; this is why the National Homeschool Association is important. The NHA is a small and diverse group run by consensus, which often means it is a cumbersome, process-oriented group. However, it is currently the only national, non-sectarian, non-profit group that is dedicated to keeping homeschooling a self-selecting and self-correcting option for all families (and I urge anyone interested in helping this group grow to join by calling 513-772-2250).

It is here that I think we stand poised for the next growth spurt in homeschooling: are we going to stay in a defensive, reactive posture and content ourselves with fending off perceived threats at every chance or are we going to step forward and become activists about the role homeschooling can have in the education of all our young? Just as we, the Farengas, realized as a family that our attention was being consumed by our business and we needed to take steps to get back to the real reasons we decided to homeschool – to give our children something special in place of school – so it is with homeschooling as a movement. We need to realize that we aren't homeschooling because we support tax credits, vouchers, deep ecology, traditional values, disestablishing school from state, etc., but simply because it works for us and our children. Of course these causes should be enjoined by those who wish to, but the causes need to remain separate from the cause of homeschooling.

We at GWS are going to continue to do our part in letting parents know that they can help their children learn outside of school, regardless of their own education and training; we will continue publishing and selling materials that challenge school assumptions, and we will continue helping people find work worth doing and lives worth living. After 20 years of *Growing Without Schooling* I conclude: you haven't seen anything yet! ◆

Parenting Without Schooling

Reflections from homeschooling's pioneering parents

Homeschooling Means Living Life Well

Alison McKee's (WI) recent GWS pieces have looked at holding family meetings and helping teenagers move out into the world. In our early years she wrote about writing, math, and how children's interests develop.

During my years as a homeschooling parent, I've experienced a significant change in the way I think about what homeschooling is. I now think it means simply living life well.

When Christian and Georgina were quite young, my initial perspective was that David and I were offering our children natural opportunities to be schooled. I surmised that they'd be taught through direct experiences of their world and, when necessary, through personalized instruction, but I still thought of them as learning the subject matter that schools require children to learn, moving from grade to grade as each year passed, and finally graduating.

I'd been attending school or teaching in it for 26 of my 33 years when Christian spent his first day of kindergarten at home with his toddler sister and me. Often, that year, I'd classify the time Christian spent involved in suitably schoolish pursuits, such as reading or math, as the homeschooled part of his day. Likewise I'd bracket the rest of his day as "out-of-school time." But as Christian got older and his interests diversified, it became difficult to make distinctions between the homeschool and out-of-school times. I could no longer label Christian's reading about the Mayflower as "reading" or "Social Studies"; it was simply an enjoyable activity.

Specific school subject matter was, I saw, a natural part of my children's lives, but those subjects had no finite beginning or end. And from this vantage point, it was easy to recognize that other subject matter was also part of each day. Building with Legos, make-believe play, fly tying, script writing, also became natural and meaningful parts of the children's lives. School might fail to recognize that creative play might someday feed an interest in script writing and building with Legos might lead to a career as a fly tyer, but did that mean I had to cast aside such endeavors and consider them educationally less worthy?

When I began consciously to understand the stupidity of such thinking, I saw the irrelevance of trying to make sense of my children's lives in terms of traditional educational terminology. Christian and Georgina learned a great deal, whether they studied fly-tying patterns, worked collaboratively on script writing projects, or knuckled down to learn traditional math for the ACT exam.

As years passed, I began to consider the world as my children saw it. About ten years ago, David came home after taking Christian out to lunch and told me about their conversation. David had asked Christian whether he ever missed school. Christian answered, "I never thought about it." What a revelation! Our child had never missed school, and therefore, unlike his peers and parents, probably didn't even view the world through the filter of school experiences.

That made me consider the possibility that Christian didn't think much about being homeschooled, either. I thought about the reaction he and Georgina gave when people asked them about grades, curriculum, and teaching. On numerous occasions, I'd seen them hem and haw in response to questions about what grade they were in, what they studied, and where they went to school. With a slight pause but with great finesse, and using vocabulary they'd seen me model, they would often use the school vocabulary and say, "I'm in fifth grade, I study animals, and I am homeschooled."

On other occasions, though, and this was most telling, when people asked about the children *without* making reference to school, Christian or Georgina wouldn't refer to it, either. They would say, "I'm 9 years old and I really like animals," or something similar. There was no natural inclination to explain their lives in terms of being in a grade or even in terms of being homeschooled. I realized that my kids didn't think about themselves as either schooled or homeschooled. They simply lived according to what life brought their way.

As time passed, they often voiced their irritation to me about having to answer these typical questions continuously. One afternoon Christian came home particularly bothered because he had spent a significant part of his afternoon unsuccessfully trying to explain to a curious adult what his homeschooling life was like. "Don't people get it, Mom?" he said. "I'm not in any grade or in any school. I'm simply me and I learn what I enjoy learning." This was it, then. Christian had probably never thought of what he did as Social Studies or Language Arts, unless of course someone put such notions in his head, and he certainly didn't define himself as having a particular grade level or school affiliation. Why had I ever thought that my never-schooled children would think any differently?

Today, it's as though I've come a full circle. When

Christian and Georgina were preschoolers, I didn't try to think of what they did in terms of school's vernacular. Today, I find that I rarely think of them as anything other than a 19-year-old and a 15-year-old who have vast and diverse interests, who seek parental direction and support at times, rebuff that direction and support at other times, and live very interesting lives. My children's lives haven't been homeschooled lives as much as they've simply been lives well lived.

Doing Nothing the Easy Way

Ruth Matilsky's (NJ) many GWS pieces explore such topics as learning from real life, involving toddlers in homeschooling, and forming support groups.

Having children enabled me to grow up. When my children were little, the issues were food and birthing and baby care. To birth them at home I had to overcome many obstacles and much resistance from the medical community and from relatives and friends. Then there is baby care. A lot of people who don't homeschool think homeschooling begins at kindergarten age, but it really starts when they are born.

My husband Terry and I joke that we did nothing the easy way. Among other choices, we never used television as a babysitter, and in fact we gave it away when Sara, our oldest, was 5. I gave it away because *I* was an addict and I couldn't bear the idea of my daughter watching her mother watch soap operas. We never would have given up TV if we hadn't had kids, and the decision has probably changed Terry and me in many subtle ways of which we are unaware. I also now understand that because we didn't use television as a babysitter, we were forced to interact more with our kids at every stage of their development.

So now the stage was being set for the kind of home life we wanted and it was time for the big school decision, except by then it wasn't such a big decision. We read John Holt's books and decided that it made sense that if you create a stimulating environment and answer your children's questions they will learn what they need to know to live happily in this world. The "friend" issue was more of an issue than John implied, however. He asked me once, "Do you have friends?" and when I said yes, he answered that then the kids would have friends. And for a while, when Sara was young, that was true. I would see my friends during the day, and sometimes we would get together with other families on weekends and the kids would play and it was fine. But when Sara got to be school age, things changed. After a very short time in kindergarten the kids were different, and resentful that Sara didn't have to go. I looked around me and there it was – me and Sara and toddler Jake and nobody else during the day.

Then began my campaign to start a homeschooling group. I joined every homeschooling group in New Jersey (and they were all far away) and wrote articles for our co-op newsletter and followed up every lead concerning possible homeschoolers in our area. People began calling me, and we met weekly, until I looked around me five years later and was awed at what had been created. We had a viable group that has continued to build and has actually spawned two other groups. Now we are living in a town where there are at least 20 homeschooling families and many, many activities that are held on a regular basis, and *I'm not doing the organizing!* At the beginning, all the meetings were held at my house and I would decide on field trips and tell everyone where to meet; now I do almost none of that.

It's been quite empowering to me to see what I could do to create the support I needed. Just one little step at a time, and now Matthew, my 8-year-old, thinks that it is normal for homeschooling kids to have such a wonderful community. This helps me in other areas of my life because I realize that I can be creative. For example, right now I am trying to move our food co-op, and I am using the same techniques of gentle perseverence and stick-to-itiveness that I used when I was trying to get a homeschooling group going.

When we began homeschooling, I did it because school had been so boring for me and I didn't want my kids to waste their time for all those years. As time has gone on, I have added other reasons. It is my stock answer to the socialization question now to tell people that the most important relationships are the family relationships: twenty years from now, my kids may or may not be involved with their present playmates, but they will definitely be involved in some way or other with their siblings, and the best time to work out their relationships is now. If my kids went to school, their time together would be limited, they probably wouldn't be involved in many of the same projects, they wouldn't be working together on such a regular basis to make our house run, they probably wouldn't play with the same kids of different ages, as they do now, and wouldn't have to work out the social dynamics of having a mutual friend. Certainly Sara, now 17, wouldn't have gotten to spend as much time with Loren Isaac, who is 4. And Sara and I have some of the same friends; that is actually fascinating and never would have happened if she had been in school. And I can hope that the fighting and bickering among the kids will decrease as they get older; I can already see interesting progress among the older children. Jake, now 15, and April, now 10, have told me lately to stay away when they are arguing because they are working things out and they don't need me in the middle. I am thrilled because I never thought this would happen.

Even though I was bored in school, there were a lot of things that I accepted as OK that my own kids have shown me are not OK, and that has made me realize how my own personality and attitudes and habits have been shaped. I am constantly learning things about myself as we get deeper into homeschooling, and these things are helping me grow. For example, Jake once spent several hours in a school while his friend was doing some kind of Suzuki thing. After sitting at a desk all day, he was amazed that most kids have to sit in such uncomfortable furniture for so many hours of the day. It was the first time I actually thought about what that must have been like for me as a child. I do remember constantly fidgeting and never being able to get comfortable, and now I think that part of my

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inability to concentrate came from the discomfort I was always in.

And when Sara was preparing to spend one day in school in eighth grade, to see what it was like, I told her about the bells that signal the end of each class period. She looked at me like I was from Mars and asked, "Bells?" It was the first time I thought about how I had been programmed to be on time and always to have a finishing time and never be able to just pursue a subject to its logical conclusion. Sara pointed out to me that you just don't have time to absorb information in school because you are expected to drop one subject and go on to another when the bell rings.

I think the greatest discovery for me has been to realize that most of what we learned in school we *forgot*. I have to admit that I have been concerned when my friends who have kids in school have told me things their kids were learning that my kids weren't learning. But I understand now that unless a person is really interested and driven to know about a certain subject, most of the information is not going to stick.

Another thought I have is that homeschooling actually makes it easier, rather than harder, to let go when children grow up. After we had been homeschooling a while, I started thinking that there is something peculiar about turning a 5-year-old over to a complete stranger who will be taking care of 20 or 30 other children at the same time. I think on some level, even if they aren't in touch with it, parents suffer when they are separated from their small children. I see this in mothers of children who go to school. It's as if they are not comfortable with their own children (not all mothers are like this, of course, but I see it a lot). I think that when kids get to be teenagers and are ready to go out on their own, it is easier for homeschooling parents to let go because we have been there all along the way and have seen our children handle all kinds of day-to-day situations that kids in school would never deal with. Perhaps parents of adult children who "meddle" are still trying to fill that void.

Accepting Children, Accepting Ourselves

Deb Shell counsels many homeschooling families through her Resource Center for Homeschooling in Burlington, Vermont.

I wrote to John Holt in 1984, very pregnant with my fourth child. The letter had taken me nearly two years to articulate. Mae, my oldest, was 7, and although she was a happily thriving, busy child, I was concerned because she still seemed very attached to me and by school standards was not separating at the accepted time. (Looking back now, after having a hand in raising two step-children and four daughters, this makes me laugh – 7 is really little by any standard, and all young children benefit from easy parental access.)

What I was most afraid of was how my own idiosyncracies, including myriad shortcomings, would harmfully influence Mae. I worried that my own problems would transfer to her and thereby prevent her from separating or being different from me. During the years when my daughters were very young, I suffered from panic attacks and felt frustrated with my inability to control fears that, at times, overwhelmed me. As is typical of an anxiety response, I began to limit my exposure to situations that might trigger attacks. I sought help, but at that time not a lot was offered other than relaxation drugs which I wouldn't take. My most pressing concern was that I was a bad mother, that by my example I might be teaching my children to be as fearful as I felt I was.

Slowly, and with my husband's insistence that we treat my fear as legitimate (even if we couldn't always tell what the fear was a reaction to), I began to treat my reactions as I would have treated my children's reactions, whatever they might be, when they experienced extremely difficult situations. Mae might be predictably cautious in certain situations, especially with strangers, and Sara might be quiet or shy with adults who felt they knew her well enough for her to sit comfortably on their lap, but their behavior fit the context of who each was. It is always harder to accept behavior that arises without an observable cause. Yet this is what happens all the time with children; parents or teachers may try to direct children by telling them there's nothing to cry about, or to stop doing whatever they want to do because it's time to do this other thing. The depth of emotion that elicited those feelings isn't always apparent and can't always be articulated.

What I began to realize was that I wasn't accepting various reactions that were *normal for me*. When I normalized my anxiety instead of making it into a really big deal (which it wasn't most of the time) and stopped flirting with restrictive labels such as "agoraphobic" or "panic disorder," I actually felt more in control and less fearful. I began to give myself credit, instead, for recognizing the inadequacies of my living arrangements. I could understand that, for me, raising four children in an isolated environment, separated from extended family or even like-minded friends, was what set me up for feeling alone and sometimes frightened of my almost sole responsibility.

When I read Jean Liedloff's *The Continuum Concept*, I became much more understanding of my own needs; I didn't have a tribe to support and validate my childrearing. So there were pieces missing in terms of how I needed to be supported within an accepting community, and my fear reactions were predictable for me.

I wrote to John, desperately trying to understand how to view my daughters' strengths instead of their weaknesses (and my own). He answered wisely in his typically matter-of-fact way:

"I think it would be helpful," he wrote, "if you accepted as a fact about yourself, like the fact of your name, or height, or color of eyes, or whatever, the fact that you are afraid of certain things. Do not be ashamed or guilty because of that fear. But then, go ahead and do what you have to, or want to do. ... Chances are that as you face your fears and act in spite of them, you will find yourself getting a little less afraid. But maybe not. There are no guarantees about this. You have to go ahead and live anyway."

This advice has proven useful to me as a mother, especially in the ways that I learned to accept my daughters. None of them are like me – they are like themselves.

They accepted me from the start, shortcomings and all, and just as they are tolerant of others, they are tolerant of themselves.

John went on to say, "It would be better if, in thinking about yourself, you said something like, 'I tend to be a bit of a scaredy-cat,' rather than talking about phobias, etc. This may sound like cracker-barrel, Reader's Digest advice, but I really think, on the basis of experience, that there is quite a lot in it. ... It doesn't sound as if there is anything *too* wrong with either you or Mae. Try to relax and enjoy life and each other."

My daughters have helped me to accept and honor myself, as they accept and honor themselves. Through the years I've gleaned insights into my fear responses. I learned that many of my adult concerns reflected my childhood experience growing up in a family that validated some feelings but ignored others. What children learn from adults is to love as they are loved, to respect as they are respected; they won't automatically adopt behaviors that fit other people's agendas. I raised my daughters, and despite my own struggles, each has compelled herself to master challenge after challenge in appropriate ways that made sense to who she was and where she was going.

My children are mostly grown now, and I can say without hesitation that the process of unschooling – specifically, trusting children to lead the way toward their fulfillment – has not only given them the confidence to hone skills that help them attain their goals but has also allowed me to heal. What I gave to them wasn't a template of myself, as I had worried I might be doing; instead I gave them the freedom to self-seek, to fulfill their needs (however long it takes), and to trust in the validity of their feelings and interests. By protecting my children's freedom to discover themselves, I was also freed.

An interesting follow-up to my concern about Mae's unwillingness to separate from me at age 7 is that when she was 15, she took me by surprise by expressing interest in finding an out-of-the-house experience. Up until then she had been content to spend many hours a day reading or enjoying the company of her sisters or nearby neighbors. Just as suddenly as she had learned to read at 8 1/2, she was now ready to explore the world in ways that would have seemed completely out of character just six months earlier. My role needed to change too. It had suited me very well to be a home-body with my children, and now, suddenly, routines that had been our daily staple no longer satisfied Mae's growing appetite for outside interaction.

Together, we explored her interests and sought the help of people with whom she might volunteer. For a few months, she worked at the high school learning photography. She also explored the high school technical center and nearly enrolled so that she could learn more about computers. But the student/teacher relationship didn't feel right to her, nor did the school environment. Then, at 16, she began to volunteer at our public library, and she began to bloom.

Mae was taken under wing by a lovely staff of women of various ages. She became their own special darling in a very charming way. They indulged her by inviting her into the heart of the library operations. She became useful when they planned book discussions or poetry readings or needed breaks from running the main desk. She organized shelves, helped carry out strategies for improving space, computer technology, and fundraising. As her relationships with the staff deepened, gradually she was given more responsibility. Now, four years later, she is a paid staff member, editor of the library's quarterly newsletter, delivers books to shut-ins, and has so far given six workshops on computers and internet use.

The mentoring relationships were (and continue to be) so beautiful to me. I saw Mae being cared about and caring for others in ways that demonstrated how exceptional her interpersonal skills had become. She found a new "family" and began to write a fictionalized novella about these librarian women friends. They relished her installments. She wrote about seemingly mundane interactions and occurrences, which modeled for her (through often humorous exchanges) tolerance, creativity, and respect. Working within the library also helped her to become a contributing member of our community in her own right.

One by one, each of my daughters has made a special adult friend. They are all women who share common traits with my girls, yet they are as individual as my daughters who became drawn to them. They share knowledge and encouragement and constructive critiques. It seems so natural for my daughters to seek out other adult women to learn from and this has been a tremendous comfort to me as well. I can see that they will continue to seek what they need even without me. I can't possibly provide all that they need, and this is OK, because there are others in this world who welcome the chance to influence, encourage, and love, in a special way, our young adults.

18 Years of Homeschooling: A Long Metaphor

Maggie Sadoway (MA) wrote often in early GWS issues about including a young child in the family's retail store and about her son's learning arithmetic from real-life activities.

A few years ago, my husband and I were part of a group of parents whose 100 children were going to spend the summer at a workcamp in England. Although we could have bought our son a plane ticket like all the other parents did, we decided there were several advantages to crossing the Atlantic by ship. We knew that if he flew he would almost certainly arrive safely at the camp, although somewhat cramped, tired, and disoriented. We weren't so sure what a week-long ocean voyage would be like, but it sounded interesting, we were pretty sure he'd get to the camp on time, and, best of all, by rearranging our work lives, we could travel with him. I did have a few tears in my eyes when I saw the big yellow chartered buses that would take all his age-mates to the airport, but I *think* they were tears of relief.

The trip turned into a family adventure of the very best kind, with only a touch of seasickness along the way.

Since there were just a few children on board, our son quickly made friends with the ones who were there, no matter what their ages. He spent hours talking with the other passengers about their various interests, hung out on the bridge every morning with the captain, and heard endless stories from the English crew about life in their country and places they had visited. He gradually became familiar with their customs, currency, and accent, which greatly diminished the culture shock he would feel on arrival in England. As a family, we learned to play several shipboard games, usually with people of various ages and levels of skill. We caught glimpses of whales, read more books than usual, and thought about what it must have been like to navigate by the stars long ago. An unexpected bonus was developing long-lasting friendships with many of the other passengers.

Only once, in the midst of a short but fierce storm, did we wonder if we should have flown instead. But that evening, as we watched a spectacular sunset from a calm deck, we were reminded again of how glad we were that we'd chosen to go by boat. A couple of days later, we watched the docking procedures in Southampton with interest and walked down the gangplank with no jet lag, delighted with our experience. Our son was eager for the challenge of the workcamp just ahead, confident of his ability to learn what he wanted from a new and unfamilar experience. He even made it over to the airport in time to welcome the other 99 students, don a borrowed tux, and join in the gala celebration planned for that evening. Since he was well-rested and already knew quite a bit about English culture, his fresh perspective turned out to be useful to the others.

We've flown ourselves and know our son could have gotten to England by air, but I'm really glad we got to see those whales and watch those starry skies at night, all of us together. Besides, we got to sleep as long as we wanted to in the morning.

Note: Although I have crossed the Atlantic 14 times by plane and 6 by ship, this story nonetheless is pure fiction (but pure metaphor). What is true is that my son Solon, now 18, did borrow clothes to attend the senior prom this year in spite of never having gone to school. My husband Jack and I are looking forward to another 12-year-long "ocean voyage" with our daughter Sonya, who is almost 5.

Ideals and Regrets

Penny Barker (OH) has written for GWS frequently throughout the years about such diverse topics as finding one's work, helping with teenagers' social needs, her family's farmstead program for children, and why we shouldn't assume that early reading is preferable to later reading.

When I look back over the past twenty years, I am aware that I held various ideas and ideals for my kids. As our five children (Britt, now 28, Maggie, 24, Dan, 23, Ben, 21, and Jonah, 19) were born into our growing-without-schooling family, my ideas and ideals riveted themselves into one enduring aspiration. This desire was not for the kids to *become* something or *find* something but that they wouldn't *lose* their connection to the natural world – a connection I see as vital to their well-being as humans.

I can only assess success or failure in the meeting of my ideal by looking at where the children are today in their journey – a journey in process. It would seem presumptuous of me to attempt to describe how I've made my children meet my ideal, or even enabled them to. My husband Richard and I have, it's true, woven the environment these past 28 years and sprinkled it with enthusiasm, nurturing, and ideas, but the results seem to have come from within the inner aspects of the children – a kind of mystery whose secrets I don't begin to understand.

I've seen Britt move away from her connections with the natural world when the need for breadwinning has taken her away from her passions, but somehow she has always found her footing and returned to the sky and her music, both of which feed her spirit. Paragliding takes her off the earth but surrounds her with the universe.

Maggie took more time to become consciously aware of how important her association with the earth is, but she has strayed from it less. For eight years she was strongly committed to running sled dogs through snowy woods and mountains. This year that passion was totally replaced by sculpting. Working with clay under the entrepreneurial title of "Mud, Fire, and Spirit," she has begun to sell her bronzed work.

Ben, a challenging person to live with through his teen years, has always followed his passion and penchant for wilderness and so is secure in his relationship with the natural world. He has been able to turn his passions into breadwinning by sharing his expertise with others, leading expeditions for teens and families in the mountains and lake country of America.

Our youngest, Jonah, is intrigued with and skilled in the world of modern technology and yet so infused with "earth" conditioning that he often walks barefoot simply to feel the earth beneath his feet. He is connected.

Dan, however, is walking dangerously near the edge of disconnection. I would never, in his early years, have considered this a possibility for him. His love of nature, his daily presence with it, rang out in his joyous cello playing. But Dan is the one who chose the path of school at 17. He did two years of post-graduate work at Interlochen Arts Academy, then a year at the University of Montana before settling into Oberlin Conservatory. He is now finishing his third year there. His technical skill at cello has grown tremendously, but his spirit is dying. It has taken soul-searching and intense conversations between Richard and me, but we are both ready to recommend to Dan that he not return to the Conservatory/College environment next year. I feel he has become a near hostage to a system (institutionalized learning) that makes one dependent and then leads one cunningly down the path to disconnection.

All of these years of homeschooling, and my only regret is that one of my children chose school, a route my heart railed against while my head said it would be OK. Just as my ideals rivet themselves into one main aspiration, so also do my regrets. In hindsight, I wish Richard and I had thought more about Dan studying at Oberlin.

When I began homeschooling, it was not only to deinstitutionalize our family but to step out of the mainstream groove. With the conventionally prestigious conservatory/college route, we offered Dan the mainstream pool to jump into. Perhaps for Dan this is a kind of test to see if he will ultimately return to his connection with the earth.

Homeschooling the Second Time Around

Theo Giesy (VA), whose family's court case in 1979 set a legal precedent for homeschooling in Virginia, wrote often in GWS's early years about how children develop independence, the difference between influence and coercion, and much else.

When I wrote for the *tenth* anniversary issue of GWS, my first four children were already grown and mostly independent. Since then, Darrin (now 30) danced for several years in ballet companies, ending with the Nashville Ballet. He did theater tech work on the side. He finally decided that the dancing was putting too great a strain on his body and the tech work paid better, so he retired from dancing and is doing tech work full time.

Danile, now 32, got married in 1988 and bought land to live on about an hour from us. She and her younger sister Susie both spent time dancing with the Ringling Bros. circuses. Both found advantages and disadvantages to the job; they enjoyed the experience of circus life but have now moved on to other things. Danile came home to her land and her teaching jobs here. Susie, now 28, is living and dancing in Reno. Between touring with the circus in Japan and and traveling on her own through Europe at age 21, Susie had seen a lot of the world before she returned to the U.S.

After Anita's car trip around the U.S. which she took at 17, she decided to go to Massage Therapy School. She finished the basic course first in her class and became a certified massage therapist. While she worked as a massage therapist, she took advanced courses and is now, at 25, up to 375 hours of training toward the 500 needed for national certification. She got married two years ago. Her husband is in the Navy, stationed in Rota, Spain for three years, and they are enjoying living there.

Our biggest change since the 10th anniversary issue of GWS came when I gave birth to Ellen in 1988. So we are homeschooling again, and it is very much as Anita predicted homeschooling the next generation would be in the "Imagining the Future" Focus in GWS #87. At that time, Anita said, "When my family was deciding whether to homeschool, part of the choice had to do with whether we would be willing to go to court over it." Now, with Ellen, we don't have to debate whether or not to go against the system. Homeschooling is simply one of the options available. For us, it is just our way of life. It is a way of life that worked well for us before and it was natural to continue it. We find the same advantages as before: freedom to do things like ice skating during school hours, freedom to learn what you are interested in when you are interested, freedom from labeling.

With our first round of homeschoolers, we had to spend a lot of time talking to the press, to the legislature, to groups. Now homeschooling is just what we do. It only comes up when people ask Ellen what grade she is in. While I enjoyed the experiences around the start of the homeschooling movement, it is really nice to be able to just live our lives, raising our child as we want to.

Finding the Work They Love

Susan Shilcock's (PA) contributions to GWS explore kids learning from each other, making laboratory science available to homeschoolers, and why it's OK for children to stop activities.

Even when our children were young, we believed that if we could help them discover the work that suited their hearts, minds, and souls, and helped them to be productive and happy members of society, then we would have reached our goal as parents. But it took many years before we were sufficiently resistant to conventional measurements and the expectations of our peers to finally let our deepest convictions lead the way on a daily basis. Eventually we realized more consciously that our primary goal was to help our children uncover their passions, and that goal came to transcend all others, including attaining high test scores, comparing a child's achievements to her peers', meeting other people's agendas, seeking the prestige of honors or college admittance.

As our mission became more evident to us, it became easier to support our children and to help them find opportunities. We were less bounded by traditional assumptions like "You should read by age 6," "You should have a well-rounded curriculum each year," "You must take the SAT to get into college," and so on. Our efforts instead were inspired by our observations of the young people in front of us, not by government regulations, school rules, or societal norms.

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An example of this transformation occurred around the issue of high school mathematics for our eldest, Amanda. At 15, she had a math tutor with whom she was dutifully studying some trig and Calculus, though clearly it was uninspiring to her. We were being driven by our agreement with the conventional wisdom that she *needed* this higher math to counterbalance her seemingly lopsided indulgence in reading and writing – her real passions – as well as to ensure that she would be acceptable if she chose to go to college.

Despite Amanda's attempt to comply with us and address these concerns, it was glaringly apparent that the math tutorial was actually interfering with the attainment of her goals *and* ours. After several months, we finally realized that Amanda was unlikely to need the content of this tutorial in any adult work that she was inclined to pursue, and even if she were to need it in the future after all, we could see that she had clearly demonstrated an ability to master new concepts in short order when there was reason to do so. So we lightened up on math and just did what was necessary to fulfill minimal math requirements for her to get her high school diploma (which our local school superintendent later granted her).

Freed from what was, for her, the onerous burden of excessive math, Amanda could now concentrate on her true loves: reading, reflecting, and writing. It was during this period that she wrote the essay that was to appear in Grace Llewellyn's *Real Lives*, and this in turn led to numerous newspaper interviews and articles that subsequently became part of her college entrance portfolio. It was also a time when Amanda's sense of her own individualism was gaining momentum, as evidenced by her decision not to take the SAT but instead to challenge the system to look at her for who she was. If we had been frightened into making Amanda do what her peers were doing, she would likely have become one of countless high achievers with plenty of hollow As and high test scores but nothing to distinguish her from the crowd. Instead, she was in a group of one with a distinctive background and credentials that were the essence of Amanda. It's somewhat ironic that by going her own route, Amanda was actually *better* positioned to get into the University of Pennsylvania (her chosen path) than she would otherwise have been.

Emily, our second daughter, also gave us some obvious clues about what genuinely excited her. As a young child, Emily constantly invented games that involved the real world and financial transactions. She set up her own stores in the house; she learned monetary denominations quickly so she could play accurately with real money. She took orders, sold tickets, wrote up receipts, and delivered items in her little mail truck or red fire engine. She always found time to create her own games in and around the activities that she did outside the home – ballet, violin playing, volunteering at a home for disabled children, taking an astronomy class. All these provided platforms for more "real world" activity.

As parents, we simply had to take Emily's play and work seriously, and we did. During these formative years, we provided her with real tickets and receipt books, an inexpensive coin changer, a homemade mini-storefront painted roadways on the driveway (to allow her to set up a community with refrigerator boxes as the shops), and plenty of open time to invent, design, and pursue her interests. We purchased a real electronic cash register for Emily's Christmas the year she turned 11, and that has become her favorite gift of all childhood.

Emily went on to volunteer and later be a paid worker at a local retail store before opening her own business, just after her 17th birthday, selling products for the elderly and disabled. Although it may seem obvious, in retrospect, that Emily's adult choices would involve business, the important point for me is that during Emily's childhood, most adults outside our family viewed all her made-up stores as only the clever play of childhood. Yet if Emily wrote a book now, it could easily be titled, "Most of What I Needed to Learn about Life, I Learned by Playing Store."

Although some consider my husband and me expert parents because we work professionally with young children through our Open Connections Family Resource Center, we have come to realize that with each new child, whether someone-else's or our own, the stage is bare and it's a whole new story. What we have learned by working with a previous child is as likely to cloud our judgment as it is to be helpful.

Thus, as we observe our third child, Julia (now 16) and attempt to help her find what makes her sing, we are like first-time parents again. We observe and listen carefully, we provide opportunities based on her requests and strengths, and we protect her free time so that she can experiment and seek. We hold problem-solving meetings with her so that she can develop new options (e.g., volunteering at a local hospital, observing veterinary surgery), and we often ask her what she wants to create in her life. But to date, although she has participated in countless classes and activities that she *likes*, there are none that she loves. Recurring themes, however, seem to be her compassion for animals, her keen observational abilities, and her highly developed intelligence for interpersonal relationships. Although we have learned much about Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, we still feel at times overwhelmed by society's tremendous bias toward the linguistically and mathematically inclined. It has only been in the past few years that we have come to fully embrace the value of Julia's special intelligence and to recognize that her skills are those necessary to be, for example, an outstanding counselor, diplomat, manager, or teacher.

Nowadays, Julia's skills translate into activities that include a Ragdoll cat breeding business, studying psychology, and working with children to develop their strengths. Any of these could turn into a life passion, but at this point predictions for her future seem premature. There are no blueprints, there is no timetable, but there is great trust that she will eventually discover her own calling.

Our fourth child, Nicholas (now 13), was a dutiful child, cheerfully participating in and learning from the activities and lessons offered to him. He showed preferences for small groups, for one or two close friends, and for easing slowly into new areas. At 12, he had acquired four antiquated computers and lined them up on tables in his room. One day I walked in and one computer was

taken apart, the internal workings spread about, and Nicholas was adjusting something with a screwdriver. I, the supposedly expert homeschooling parent of four children, who had already helped two make the transition to college, had a 12-year-old who had zoomed past my level of knowledge in a matter of weeks. It was a wonderful feeling to see him working in what was to me a foreign world, knowing that I had nothing to do with his mastering these skills. This assured me that Nicholas had taken charge of his own learning and I truly would be only a resource person on his future educational journey.

Since then, Nicholas has taught himself some rudimentary programming, designed some simple games, and generally used the computer as an integral tool in his daily life. He uses Amanda as a resource when he needs assistance, but generally he negotiates on his own and has gained tremendous confidence from his evolving expertise.

What did we do as parents to help Nicholas discover this love? We allowed him to purchase a computer for $25 at a garage sale knowing it was probably already broken ("He's wasting his money," conventional voices would say). We gave him access to tools and unscheduled time and had faith in how he chose to spend his day ("He'll waste his time"). Against our usual inclinations, we allowed him to read countless computer and game magazines. We did monitor his close-work time and made sure that he balanced it with plenty of large-motor outside activity. We hired a drawing mentor to work with Nicholas in this secondary interest of his. Right now Nicholas is developing his artwork in tandem with his computer knowledge, and he has suggested that he might want to go into graphics and computer design one day.

Because we chose a distinctive educational path, we were constantly asked questions about our children as they grew up. The focus was almost always on their scheduled activities: "How is Amanda's literature class?" "How does Julia enjoy lab science?" Almost never did anyone ask, "Has Amanda had her sisters playing library lately?" (although Amanda now sees the roots of her later love of library work in this early play) or "What new stores has Emily set up in the front hall today?" The first set of questions are comfortable and convenient for most people, perhaps helping them to track or categorize children. The second set of questions seems less substantive, more frivolous, and certainly not the pivotal piece in the puzzle of an evolving child. However, it is precisely the collection of the casual activities over the course of years that, when seen together, begin to define the inner passions of our children. Our job as parents, it seems to me, is to make sure that the daily requirements and regulations of homeschooling, the constant interferences and expectations of others, and our own needs for external validation do not blur our long-term vision or disturb our children's natural learning processes. We trust that if our children discover and follow their own dreams, they will be led in the right direction. ◆

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Additions to Directory

Here are the additions and changes that have come in since our last issue. Our complete 1997 Directory was published in GWS #114; the complete 1998 Directory will be in GWS #120.

Within each state, families are listed in zip code order, so that readers can find others in their area and travelers can find hosts in a particular region. If you're looking for someone by name rather than by region, skim the last names, which are printed in capital letters.

Our Directory is not a list of all subscribers, but only of those *who ask to be listed*, so that other GWS readers, or other interested people, may get in touch with them. If you would like to be included, please send the entry form or a 3x5 card (one family per card). Please take care to include all the information - last name, full address, and so on. Tell us if you would rather have your phone number and town listed instead of your mailing address (we don't have space to list both).

If a Directory listing is followed by a **(H)**, the family is willing to host GWS travelers who make advance arrangements in writing.

If a name in a GWS story is followed by a state abbreviation in parentheses (e.g. "Jane Goldstein (MA) writes...") that person is in the Directory. If the name is followed by the entire state name (e.g. "Jane Goldstein of Massachusetts writes...") then that person is not in the Directory. We are happy to forward mail to those whose addresses are *not* in the Directory. If you want us to forward the letter without reading it, mark the *outside* of the envelope with writer's name/description and the issue number. If you want us to read the letter and then forward it, please enclose another stamped envelope.

When you send us an address change for a subscription, please remind us if you are in the Directory, so we can change it here, too.

Please remember that we can't control how the Directory is used; if you receive unwanted mail as a result of being listed, just toss it out or recycle it.

AZ — Cathy ALGER & Ed CUMMINS (Eli/86, Kaelin/89) PO Box 6209, Lees Ferry, Marble Canyon 86036 (change) **(H)**

CA, South (zips to 94000) — John & Suzanne ROOT (Alexandra/91, Thomas/93, David/95, Matthew 97) 3585 Emma Ln, Vista 92084-6634 ••• Anu & Ajit SIMH (Anjali/85, Abish/90) 11467 Via Playa de Cortes, San Diego 92124 ••• Bob BLAIR & Zona GRAY-BLAIR (David/89) 443 S Orange Av, Brea 92821 **(H)** ••• Rose Ann & Jose GUTIERREZ (Richard/79, David/82, Mark 85) 36601A Millwood Dr, Woodlake 93286-9743 (change)

CO — Terry & Kathy COLBERT (Sarah/82, Samantha/86, Julia/92) PO Box 271837, Ft Collins 80527-1837 (change)

CT — Betsy GOLDBERG & Allan BRISON (Rebecca/88, Diana/90) 115 Everit St, New Haven 06511-1306 (change) **(H)**

IN — David & Tamara JONES (Brandon/82, Kedric/85, Derek/88, LaShana/91) 7311 Acorn Dr, Newburgh 47630 **(H)** ••• Kenneth & Cynthia BLAND (Alexis/96) Discovery Toys, 5207 E Baycroft Ct Lot 27, Monticello 47960

ME — Duane HANSON & Lee HANSON-CART (Yule/90, Johann/92, Finn/94) PO Box 205, Jackman 04945

MA — Chris & Caroline CLAUSEN (Neil/90) 23 Phillips Rd, Nahant 01908-1123 ••• Catherine & Rob STREIFFER (Samuel/94) 1010 Mass Av #61, Cambridge 02138

MI — Greg & Cary DARDAS (Max/88, Samantha/90, Alex/93, Hannah/96) 3435 Win-Kae Pl, Bay City 48706 (H)

MT — Daryl & Valerie VAN OORT (Jessica/76, Martin/79, Nicholas/85) 501 St Mary's Av, Deer Lodge 59722-1553 (change) **(H)**

NY — Virginia & Anthony PURDY (Gemma/91) 500 W 235 St, Bronx 10463 ••• Ann & Arnold GREEN (Denise/80, Wendy/90) 12 Homestead Village Dr, Warwick 10990 **(H)** ••• Sandy & Roger BAGLEY (Jacob/87, Grace/89, Rose/91, Charles/93) 9 Prospect Pk W, Brooklyn 11215-1741 ••• Susan HOFFMAN & Albert PATALONA (Andrew/90, Beth/92) 42 Gabriel Rd, Chochecton 12726

PA — Donna & Karl GLESSNER (Carrie/86, Jacob/89) 166 Baltzer Bridge Rd, Fredens 15541 (change) ••• Marc & Lisa HUGUS (Grant/93) 6 Buckingham Dr, Stoneboro 16153-2730

TN — Charles & Jane STODDARD (Nicolette/87) 412 Perkins Dr, Franklin 37064 **(H)**

TX — Ruth MINTLINE (Erin/84) 3339 Lanarc Dr, Plano 75023

VA — Olga DARVIRA (Eratosthenis/92) 1436 Oakview Dr, McLean 22101

WV — Barbara Ann VOLK & Mik WRIGHT (Autumn/87, Leila/88) Rt 4 Box 551, Weston 26452 **(H)**

WI — Henry & Julie THOMPSON (Marcy/95) 2108 Muir Field Rd #2, Madison 53719

Canada:

AB — John & Rena GROOT (Sarah/87, Shalev 90, Shane/94, Savannah/96) 6207 39 Av, Stettler T0C 2L1

BC — Marilyn & Tuck KONSTAPEL (Amber/91) 26607 30A Av, Aldergrove V4W 3C8

ON — Eve PETERSEN (Peter/85, Ian/86) Scarborough Homeschoolers, 135 Clappison Blvd, Scarborough M1C 2H3 **(H)**

SK — Celia & Peter GOODE (Kathleen/82, Alan/87) #90-1128 McKercher Dr, Saskatoon S7H 4Y7

Other Locations — Julie RIDLEY & Al BIRKS (Sadie/90, Ruby/94, Casey/96) 32 Cheltenham Rd, Chorlton, Manchester **England** M21 9QN ••• Cathie & Fred WILLIAMS (Luke/88, Emily/91) PO Box 228, Westport **New Zealand (H)**

Groups to Add to the Directory of Organizations (the complete list was published in GWS #114):

IL – Unschoolers Network, 736 N Mitchell Av, Arlington Hts 60004, 847-253-8902, email PJADK@aol.com

Canada: Educare: Homeschooling News, Box 23021, Woodstock ON N4T 1R9 ••• Montreal Metropolitan Support Group, website http://www.angelfire.com/mn/neventfamily/

Address Changes:

OH – Families Unschooling in the Neighborhood (FUN), 3636 Paris Blvd, Westerville 43081, 614-794-2171, email Roy@gn.net

Groups to Delete:

FL – Home Education Assistance League

Writing to GWS

Please: (1) Put separate items of business (book orders, directory entries, letters to GWS, etc.) on separate pieces of paper. This helps us get them to the right people more quickly. (2) Put your name and address at the top of each letter.

How to write letters for publication in GWS:

1. Handwrite, type, or dictate your thoughts and send them in on paper, on a cassette tape, or on a 3.5" disc that can be read by a Macintosh (send the hard copy too).

2. There is no #2! We have no formal submission procedures, so rule #1 is all you need. Do tell us whether it's OK to use your name with the story (it's fine to be anonymous instead) and do bear in mind that we edit letters for space and clarity and that we often have much more great stuff than room to print it in a given issue, so it can take a while before something gets in.

The best way to get a sense of what kind of writing gets published in GWS is to look through a few issues. In general, we prefer writing that is in the first- or third-person ("I did this" or "She did that") rather than in the instructional or prescriptive second-person ("You should do this..."). We like to hear about what people did or tried, what did or didn't work, what they've observed or concluded or wondered as a result. GWS stories focus on how children learn, particularly how they learn outside of school settings, and how adults learn, particularly how they tried something new, figured something out, or made their way without school credentials.

We're always interested in responses to writing that has been published in the past, and GWS is often an ongoing conversation among its readers. Because there isn't much time between the day you get an issue of the magazine and the day the next issue goes to press, responses can't always be run right away, but we do try.

Most of the time, readers don't need a special invitation to write to GWS, just follow rule #1, above. When we are planning to have a section of an issue focus on a specific topic or question, we write or call people ahead of time inviting them to write on that topic. These are readers whom we suspect (based on previous correspondence) have experience with the subject or something to say on the topic. The more we hear from you, the more likely we are to know what you might be able to write about and thus the more likely we are to think of you when a particular topic

(cont. on page 46)

ENTRY FORM FOR DIRECTORY

Use this form to send us a new entry or a substantial address change to be run in the next available issue of GWS.

Adults (first *and* last names):

Organization (only if address is same as family):

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Full address (Street, City, State, Zip):

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comes up. For our regular Focus section, we ask kids who have written in the past, kids who have said they would like to write, and – mostly – kids chosen at random from the Directory and pen-pal listings. If you want to be asked to write for an upcoming Focus, drop us a card, or, better yet, write a GWS story about something else (your thoughts or experiences, your response to something in a previous issue).

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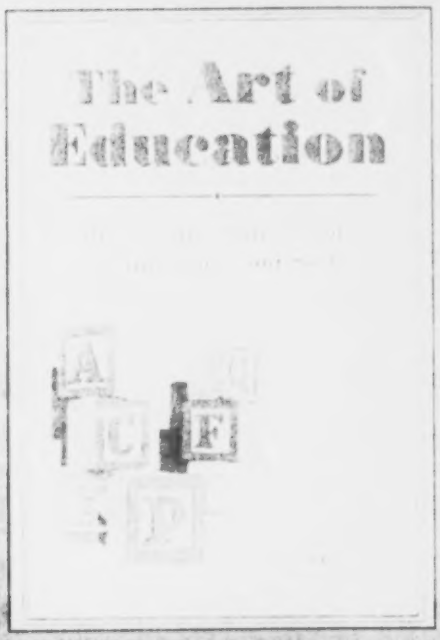

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Hard Times at Home:
Is Home-schooling Still Possible?

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Scenes from Our 20th Anniversary Conference

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Issue #119
Nov. - Dec. '97

GWS

Founded in 1977
By John Holt

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Growing Without Schooling #119 Vol. 20 No. 4 ISSN #0275-5305. Published by Holt Associates, 2269 Mass. Ave., Cambridge MA 02140. $25 yr. Date of issue: Nov.-Dec. 1997. Second-class postage paid at Boston, MA and at additional mailing offices.
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to GWS, 2269 Mass. Ave., Cambridge, MA 02140.
ADVERTISERS: Space reservation deadlines are the 1st of odd-numbered months. Copy deadlines are the 15th. For rates and other info, write Barb Lundgren, 3011 Hickory Hill, Colleyville, TX 76034, call 817-540-0423.

In this issue

Is homeschooling easier when things are going smoothly at home? Sure, but then just about everything is. Is homeschooling harder during times of family crisis? Sure, but just about everything is. The question for families who have been homeschooling for a long time is: does homeschooling become *impossible* when a family crisis hits?

When the situation at home is stressful or even unhealthy, people's immediate response is typically, "Get the kids out of there; homeschooling is no longer an option." For some families, homeschooling just doesn't *feel* like an option during life's hardest times. School may even seem like a respite or a haven when compared to a bad situation at home – and in some situations, with some types of schools, this might be true.

But the parents who write for this issue's Focus force us to reconsider the idea that homeschooling is impossible when times are tough at home. These parents say, having our children around enabled us to deal with family crises *as a family*, and, equally important, within a community. Homeschooling can be an asset during a family's hardest days if it's seen as a foundation that is both solid enough to support the family and flexible enough to bend to its current, out-of-the-ordinary needs. Homeschooling continued working for these families because they let "homeschooling" mean whatever they needed it to mean at the time. Sometimes it meant immersing oneself in the study of Ancient Greece because that was a welcome escape from the pain and grief of caring for a severely ill father. Sometimes it meant abandoning one's usual routine in order to sleep and think and just try to absorb the changes that a divorce brings. Either way, the emphasis was on letting homeschooling serve one's needs rather than dictate them.

Homeschooling also continued working because the families didn't try to do everything themselves – a good guiding principle even in the best of times. Other family members and friends were crucial to their kids', and their own, passage through the difficult time. The kids were able to look outward when they needed to look outward (to turn to others for what wasn't available at home) and to turn inward when they needed to turn inward (to forego familiar activities to focus on themselves or on the family).

For one of the families who wrote for this issue, the question was not, "Can we continue homeschooling during a tough situation?" but "Given the many stresses under which our family labors" – notably, substance abuse and a very difficult childhood history – "can we even consider starting homeschooling?" Their answer, that homeschooling was the catalyst that led them to become the kind of family they wanted to be, shows very dramatically that it's not just kids who can change through homeschooling, it's entire families as well.

Raising one's children, in the fullest sense of the word, and not delegating that task to someone else, is what makes families stronger. As John Holt put it, people then have money in the bank which they can draw on when times get tough. – Susannah Sheffer

College Admissions News

Survey of Acceptance Rates for Homeschoolers

Ken Danford of the Pathfinder Learning Center in Amherst, Mass. sent us a copy of a paper he's written, "College Acceptance Rates for Homeschooling Students: Limited Data Shows Comparable Rates to High School Students." Some excerpts:

... One hundred colleges and universities were surveyed about the number of homeschooling applicants they have received during each of the past five years, the number of these applicants accepted, and the average rate of acceptance for all applicants at their school. Thirty-one schools responded. The results indicate that most schools do not have the data requested – few schools can identify the number of applications they have received from homeschoolers. Those that did respond often had just one or two years' worth of data, and a number of schools responded that they are just beginning to gather such statistics. The schools with actual numbers to report reveal that homeschoolers tend to do about as well as traditionally schooled students in gaining admission. In the fifteen schools that did supply data, homeschooling applicants had acceptance rates somewhat better than average at public universities and somewhat worse than average rates at private colleges and universities, but the number of applicants involved is so small as to make even these claims shaky. Significantly, no school categorically rejects or denies admission to those who homeschool, and it appears that homeschoolers who make strong cases for admission through test scores, portfolios, and other presentations can gain admission to any college or university in the United States, and that the decision to homeschool in itself neither helps nor hinders this process. Continued research in this area over the next several years may produce much more solid conclusions as admissions offices begin to collect this data.

... Several respondents offered written comments which shed a bit more light on the current state of affairs, all of which suggest that homeschooling applicants are welcome and respected at admissions offices and that homeschoolers who matriculate seem to perform admirably at these schools. A note from the University of Vermont characterizes this entire study:

"Unfortunately, our office does not have any reliable method of tracking homeschooled students in the admissions process. Even the anecdotal information we have is inconsistent. It is clouded by memory of some homeschoolers who were in and out of other schools sporadically. We also know many students who were homeschooled for their entire high school careers. What we have seen consistently is that many homeschoolers are very solid students. They are well prepared for college work."

Brigham Young University wrote, "Homeschooled students are performing, on average, at the B+ (3.4) level at BYU." The University of Massachusetts noted, "[Homeschoolers are] some of our top students."

Several expressed concerns about homeschoolers being prepared for the admissions process requirements – some transcript or GED, standardized tests, and a demonstrated range of courses taken at a college prep level, including foreign language. The University of Vermont wrote, "[We] are aware of only one recurring problem with homeschooled students. Some of our homeschooled applicants are missing the University's entrance requirements."

Aside from such concerns, the general tone of the responses was positive and curious – several respondents mentioned looking forward to seeing the results. The Williams College response exemplified this tone with the enthusiastic conclusion, "Personally, I think homeschooling is great!"

... Perhaps the most striking conclusion [of this study] is one that might easily go unnoticed. No school categorically rejects admission to homeschooled students. Many families making the decision about whether to homeschool express concerns about the implications of this decision for future college admissions. The evidence generated in this study indicates that homeschoolers who create a transcript or hard evidence of academic work, perform well on a battery of standardized tests, and acquire a GED if necessary, will face little trouble in gaining admission to college. ....

Whether the choice to homeschool helps or hinders the admissions process for college-bound youth remains an open question. The self-selection involved in the type of student who might homeschool and then apply to college raises questions when trying to compare homeschooling acceptance rates to the general rates for all students. The University of Kentucky observes, "Our experience has been that only very well qualified students apply to UK from homeschool programs, which will skew the 'acceptance rate.'" On the other hand, it is unclear why the self-selection process in choosing what schools to apply to would be any different for homeschoolers than for traditionally educated students.

... It seems that the sooner colleges and universities adjust their data collection to provide feedback on [homeschoolers' acceptance rates], the more they will able to contribute to families and students confronting the daunting decision of whether educating themselves is an appropriate choice. The limited conclusion here is that the choice to homeschool in and of itself poses no serious risk or benefit to the college admissions process.

Readers interested in the full text of Ken's survey results should send $3 to cover costs to Ken Danford, Pathfinder Learning Center, 256 N. Pleasant St, Amherst MA 01002.

More SAT-Optional Schools

The National Center for Fair and Open Testing (FairTest) has for several years maintained a list of colleges that make the SAT and ACT optional for applicants. A recent press release from FairTest announces that "at least 280 four-year college and university campuses now do not use ACT or SAT results to make admissions decisions for many applicants. That figure represents an increase of more than four dozen test-score optional schools since a similar FairTest count in 1995 and a rise in the total by almost one hundred since 1994."

The press release continues: "The current ACT/SAT optional list includes highly selective private liberal arts schools, such as Bates, Bowdoin, Dickinson, Lafayette, and Muhlenberg, as well as public universities in several states including Arkansas, Kansas, Maine, Oregon, and, most recently, Texas, which now automatically admits all students who graduated in the top 10 percent of their high school classes without considering test scores. According to FairTest Executive Director Laura Barrett, 'The growing test-score optional movement reflects increasing concerns that reliance on ACT and SAT results limits the diversity of applicant pools, excludes many young people whose talents are not reflected by multiple-choice tests, and favors students who can afford expensive coaching classes.' ... In addition to the 280 schools on the list, FairTest found that hundreds of other undergraduate institutions have deemphasized standardized exams in their admissions processes but have not yet taken the step of dropping their test score requirements."

For a free copy of the updated list, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Tests Optional at FairTest, 342 Broadway, Cambridge MA 02139. A directory of these schools is also available on FairTest's web page: http://fairtest.org

U.S. Armed Forces Requirements

Andrew Hill of Minnesota writes:

I began my home education in fifth grade. After a brief and unhappy attempt at public high school, I returned to homeschooling to finish my high school education. In selecting a curriculum, my family and I settled on American School, based in Chicago. One of the most important reasons I chose American School over other programs was that American School advertised that its diplomas were acceptable to the U.S. Armed Forces. Although I was not considering joining the service at the time, the fact that I *could* join with an American School diploma was a strong selling point.

Now, several years after graduating from American School, I applied for enlistment in the U.S. Navy to take advantage of the Monterey, California Defense Language Institute. During the admissions process, I was embarrassed and appalled to learn that my hard-earned American School diploma was completely unacceptable to not only the Navy but to all branches of the Armed Forces. Fortunately, I had already completed several years of college, and my college credits were acceptable to the Navy.

Home-educated high school students should be aware that no non-traditional high school diploma such as a GED, American School diploma, or other non-classroom-participation-based diploma is acceptable for enlistment in the U.S. military. Many such diplomas were accepted at one time but are no longer accepted due to a change in regulations. I know from personal experience that the American School has neglected to inform its students and recent graduates of this change, and it is possible that there are other programs that have failed to notify their students. I recommend that anyone in a non-traditional program that is advertised as acceptable to the U.S. military ask for a guarantee in writing and check with their local recruitment office.

News from the Philippines

Candace Thayer-Coe wrote about homeschooling in the Philippines for our Focus in GWS #109, "Homeschooling Abroad." Now she writes:

I continue to meet more people interested in their children learning at home one way or another. I am very involved with organizing and facilitating the growth of this community. I have held three homeschooling get-togethers where I have shared our library of books and newsletters; I have put together a Homeschoolers' Directory, along with ideas about how to use it to share talents that will benefit our children. (I've suggested a Writers Club, Games Day, Book Club, Theme Day, to name a few.)

I decided to get the ball rolling by announcing an art workshop for homeschoolers. Now there are 10 to 12 children regularly attending every Friday afternoon for about four hours. The children range from age 6 to 12. There is plenty of time to do art, socialize, have a snack, and swim.

I further facilitated the growth of the homeschooling community here by placing a notice about our supportive homeschooling group in the "Support and Interest" page of the American Women's Club newsletter. I also put a notice in the Asian Development Bank Women's Club newsletter requesting tutors among the foreign spouses of Bank personnel (who are

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now legally able to work here). Recently, I made a flier and, through a friend, put it up at the National Science High School, asking for graduating students who might be interested in doing science experiments together with homeschooled children. I made the offer as a summer job possibility and received many calls, so I made a list of the students who responded and sent it to all the homeschooling families in our group. I got the ball rolling by hiring two graduating students to do a science workshop with my own children. We invite other families to join, but one at a time so that the kids can really be involved and not just watching.

I am hoping that someone else besides me will hold a homeschooling get-together. Our group is made up of a combination of Filipino families and foreign families, and some are mixed North American/Filipino. It may just be too difficult to create and maintain a homeschooling group because we are all so philosophically and culturally different. Furthermore, there is the added difficulty of dealing with a very class-stratified society. On the bright side, I have gotten feedback that the Directory of Homeschooling Families in our area is being used.

... and from Japan

Kyoko Aizawa writes from Japan:

This March, the Ministry of Health and Welfare here was trying to change the welfare law. The aim of this amendment was to put children who do not go to school, including "school refusers," into the juvenile reformatory.

We don't have any alternatives to schooling in Japan, but, as you may know, there are so many problems in the schools here: bullying, physical and verbal punishment by the teachers, high pressure, etc. If a child wants to quit school, he or she doesn't have any other way but to be a school refuser. Because of the high pressure that society places on them, they often commit suicide, use violence against their parents, or sleep during the daytime and only get up at night.

We took an action to oppose the recent amendment, with support from abroad. We made a demand with more than 300 names (including lawyers, educators, and parents), and took it to the legislature. I was then invited by the committee of Health and Welfare in the House of Representatives and was asked my opinion regarding this amendment, as a home educator. I explained that we need the right to an alternative way of education as soon as possible, especially home-based education. There are about 180,000 children here, of elementary and junior high school age, who do not go to school.

As I am an advocate of home education, I talked about home education in the U.S. and England. We had translated a booklet called *School is Not Compulsory* from the British homeschooling group Education Otherwise, and I took some of these books with me when I spoke to the committee. The members were surprised to hear about the idea of home education abroad.

The members ended up adopting an incidental resolution to the bill saying that children can't be sent to the reformatory just because they are not going to school. I think we won! But the idea of home education is still in its early stage in Japan. It is very difficult for us because access to higher education and jobs all depend on early schooling. On June 19, the Japan Federation of Bar Associations presented a report on the implementation in Japan of the convention on the rights of the child, and in the section on "Education, Leisure, and Cultural Activities, Education and Educational System in Japan," they wrote, "1. Places of education should not be limited to schools, but alternative forms of education such as home-based education should be approved; 2. Children who choose home-based education should be approved as having completed compulsory education, thus entitling these children to receive education at high schools." They had asked my opinion regarding this report and had accepted my advice.

Office News

[SS:] We're all gradually recovering from the excitement and intensive work of our 20th anniversary conference. The staff and the "incredible conference organizers," as one person referred to them on the evaluation form, did a spectacular job. You'll see several photos from the conference and read reflections on the experience in this issue. It was certainly great fun for all of us to meet so many GWS readers from all around the country and from abroad, too.

Thanks also to the readers who have sent us lovely responses to the anniverary *issue* (#118) ; these too have been gratifying. We will continue to have that special issue for sale throughout the year.

This fall our focus will be on expanding the distribution and sales of the materials Holt Associates publishes – the books we have acquired from Home Education Press, such as Cafi Cohen's *And What About College* and Linda Dobson's *The Art of Education*, the titles we have carried for several years, such as Nancy Wallace's *Child's Work* and those of John Holt's books that we ourselves publish, such as *Instead of Education* and the new edition of *Teach Your Own*, and our own publications like Pat Farenga's *The Beginner's Guide to Homeschooling*, the volume of GWS #1-12, and smaller booklets of selected GWS articles, which we are just working on now. If any readers have connections with book distributors or have any suggestions about ways to spread the word about these materials – for example, libraries or bookstores or groups to whom we might send our wholesaler's brochure – please let us know.

We apologize for printing the phone number of the National Homeschool Association incorrectly in our last issue. The number is: 513-772-9580.

Calendar

Oct. 24-26: Home Educators' Resource Organization (HERO) of Oklahoma Fall Family Conference and Retreat at Arrowhead State Park in SE Oklahoma. For info: email moverles@wiltel.net

We are happy to print announcements of major homeschooling events, but we need plenty of notice. Deadline for GWS #120 (events in Jan. or later) is Nov. 10. Deadline for GWS #121 (events in March or later) is Jan. 10. ◆

The Power of Pen-Pals

[SS:] A radio host recently asked me how home-schoolers could ever have the chance to exchange and debate ideas with other students. I told her about all the different kinds of groups I knew about, and I also said that pen-pals are a wonderful, if less obvious, way for a similar interaction to occur. Here are some stories that show how this has worked for a few young people.

Critquing Writing; Discussing Politics and Education

From Joanna Hoyt (ME):

I have always had a hunger for discussion. I live in a small town and only one of my parents drives, which makes it more difficult to talk about things with people outside the family face-to-face. And even if I had been surrounded by people I might have had a hard time finding people with my interests who had enough time and energy to discuss them with me. My mother and I have talked through many interesting issues, but even she gets worn down eventually and declares the "question office" to be closed. So pen-pal relationships have been invaluable to me.

As a 9-year-old I started writing to an unschooled girl who heard about me through GWS. We wrote about the joys and difficulties of having younger siblings, about figuring out how to deal with our mothers, about how hard it was to find girl friends who didn't talk boys and clothes all the time, and about incidents in our daily lives. Sometimes it helped just to have someone else to write about these things to, regardless of what she answered. We were just beginning to send each other poetry, tips on salamander-catching and birding, and thoughts about favorite books when she moved and stopped writing to me.

Last year, when I was 14, I was engrossed in writing a long fantasy historical fiction story about an eleventh-century minstrel. Susannah Sheffer put me in touch with an unschooled writer who was very close to my age and was working on a hundred-page story about a "perfect world" and its difficulties. Both of us were looking for other people to read and comment on our stories and discuss the writing experience. Each letter included a story installment and comments and questions about the other person's story. Jenny advised me about possible titles, told me when my Welsh geography became confusing, suggested ways to come up with names for difficult characters, and told me when my changes of tone seemed jarring. Sometimes she would make a brief comment on her impression of my story that made me look at it from a different perspective and change it a little bit. In return I asked questions about her characters' personalities and suggested places where she might want to slow down the pace a little bit.

We also wrote about other elements in our education. She found it helpful to belong to a math club, a writing club, and a literary club to keep her focused, whereas I preferred to work on things on my own and at my own pace and share them with family or pen-pals whenever I felt ready to.

I've had a different kind of correspondence with another unschooled pen-pal. I wrote to her because I had heard that she too was interested in writing stories, but in her first reply she said that she had decided to focus on music and let her writing go for awhile. It turned out, however, that we had many other shared interests. We wrote about alternative-healing techniques (I was learning to use wild herbs; she used the gentle hands-on "Bowen technique"), politics (we agreed people should be able to vote before turning 18 and disagreed on whether or not war was ever right and whether or not patriotism involved supporting whatever wars your country was involved in), the highlights of her music and my writing, and the difficulties of balancing art with family time and other projects and studies.

And the pen-pal adventure continues. I just got a letter from a soon-to-be unschooler interested in poetry, music, conservation, fantasy, and Native American history, and I'm looking forward to new issues to discuss and a new perspective on the world.

Discussing Books and Ideas; Supporting Each Other

From Dori Griffin of Tennessee:

I began writing to pen-pals about five years ago, and since then I've written to about fifty different people (though not all at once). I consider some of my pen-pals to be among my closest friends, and I'm continually amazed that I know so many people so well just by writing to them. Here are a couple of examples.

My pen-pal Kathryn has many things in common with me: a love of reading, of Broadway musicals, of writing, dancing, just about everything. We have a very comfortable sort of friendship. We always swap news about books, movies, music, and dance. It's neat to write to someone who really knows what I'm talking about when I discuss ballet; it's also been encouraging to write to someone who knows how much dance really means to a dancer. I'm currently taking at least a year off from dance (due to injuries) and that's been hard to deal with. Being able to talk to someone who knows that dancing is as natural as breathing and sleeping for me – and almost as hard to give up – has made things a bit easier. The more I write to Kathryn, the more I discover we have in common, whether it's little things like having the same favorite song or bigger things like being different from other teenagers around us and having to deal with that.

I could hardly write about pen-palling without mentioning my dear friend Sarah. We aren't exactly alike, but we are startlingly so, and it is

uncanny at times to hear my own thoughts before I say (or sometimes even think) them. Sarah and I have discussed everything from creation vs. evolution to the relativity of time. The books we're reading always figure in every letter. I've read several books on Sarah's recommendation – *The Mozart Season*, for example, and Patricia McKillip's fantasy books, which at first I didn't like but now I really appreciate.

Sarah is usually the person I turn to when I'm feeling in need of encouragement or empathy. She listens tirelessly while I discuss the trials, tribulations, and joys of publishing my zine, *The Inkwell*. She reads my stories and gives her opinions. She's been a real source of encouragement as I debate the issue of college. She's going off to college this fall and has shared with me her experiences of the admissions process. And lastly, she believes in me. When facing floods of rejection letters from short story markets, I wrote to Sarah in desperation and she responded by assuring me that she had faith in me and my writing. Being believed in like that, by someone outside my family, is so very comforting – and amazing.

Of course, pen-palling is a give-and-take situation. I haven't tried to explain just what I provide for my pen-pals in the way of companionship, encouragement, or insight, because I'm not entirely sure. I know that I listen to them, believe in them, and give my wholehearted friendship to them. They would have to be the ones to say what those things mean to them. I only know that their friendship means more to me than I could ever fully explain.

Making a Writer Out of a Nonwriter

From Peter Kowalke (OH):

I met Natalie Lloyd at a Clonlara Home Based Education Program conference in the summer of 1991. At the time, the two of us were 12. I attended a session which proved memorable: for two straight hours a group of eight preteens were left with a video camera and a miniature stage. Camera shy at the time, and with a father that teaches television production, I was cameraman. Theatre Goddess even then, Natalie was our leading lady. Despite repetitious death at the hands of alien invaders, Natalie caught my eye. Having never written a letter in my life, I nevertheless asked for Natalie's address at the end of the conference and committed myself to writing her a letter.

I did write Natalie a letter, albeit nine months later. Well, OK; I sent Natalie a form letter. I was new to writing and this stuff didn't come easily! I had committed to writing to more than one person, and it was obvious that I couldn't write two letters; it had already taken me nine months to concoct this one somewhat intelligible note. Then the writing itself had taken eight hours of work and about a dozen more in stress. Remember, this was my first real letter. Worse, it was to a girl (that being a good thing for me and a bad thing for the letter). I would write a few sentences, cross out a few sentences. After leaving maybe one word, I'd rush into the kitchen and proclaim that it was hopeless. Must stay the course, however. Even if my most poignant phrase was, "So, you like stuff?", this leter was going to enter the mail stream.

The letter was mailed, and three days later, my mother rushed upstairs to hand me an envelope adorned with stickers and addressed in a flowery cursive. Natalie had replied, and, no less, this Goddess of Speed-writing had replied that night and mailed her response the next morning. This set an ugly trend: now I not only had to reply, but I had to do it quickly! There was nirvana that night as I read and reread and memorized Natalie's note, but the next morning it was back to anguish and verbal humiliation. My mother, a former English teacher, would help edit the letters I wrote. This only spurred further redrafts and revisions.

Natalie and I continued our correspondence, writing once a week. The focus in my life shifted from mathematical elegance to verbal eloquence. Prior to our correspondence, I didn't write at all, partly out of shame at my inability to conquer the art and partly owing to a lack of need. Mathematics and art were the realms I most often frequented. Now, there was this girl and the only means of communication was through letters. These had to be impressive letters, so I was a devout believer in my mother's involvement. I would produce the thoughts; she would correct the presentation.

My mother was good at grammar and sentence construction, but there came a time when my letters to Natalie ceased being of a public nature. I was 13 and very fond of this girl to whom I would write consistently. Natalie couldn't date until she was 16, but that didn't matter anyway since we were separated by three hours of Ohio farmland. Yet, without much ballyhoo, slowly my mother was weaned from our correspondence.

After forging my own solo course, the letters to Natalie grew even more worthwhile and engrossing. Eventually, when I was 14, I gave her a telephone call. During the call, she influenced my inconsistent journal entries by relating her own adventures with a diary. These stories inspired me to resume my own journal with vigor.

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launching into an industrious goal of daily journal writing that I haven't broken since February 17, 1993. Most important, during our second year of acquaintance, Natalie began a creative arts publication named *Imagination*.

I was slightly hurt when first offered *Imagination*, because there were five issues already in existence before I even knew Natalie had her own magazine. I can only assume that she worried I would scoff at her tiny cut-paste-and-copy operation. Instead, when my first issue arrived, I was awe-struck. There were stories, poetry, drawings, letters to the editor. *Imagination* was a group of ten pen-pals with fertile ... imaginations, a community of people from all over the country. Most were homeschoolers, all were roughly my age and avidly into pen-pals and writing.

It had never before crossed my mind to write a fictional story, let alone have it published in a magazine. But in this issue of *Imagination*, there was a story contest. I entered it and won, with my first story ever. Naturally I had to submit other stories! I turned that first story into a serial, one that continued for an entire year and drew much fanfare (even a piece of hate mail). I also began to write poetry near the end of my serial, spurred on my one of the other contributors' poetic waxing.

After the serial had run its course, I turned my attention to creating a poetry syndicate for the magazine. I say "syndicate" because I created it in response to calls for submissions from numerous little publications that had popped up after my introduction to *Imagination*. All were little magazines that I wanted to support, hence a poetry syndicate that I could send to all the little magazines for concurrent publication. I called it *Spiral Chambers* and it eventually expanded to encompass numerous little magazines and a monthly readership of 20,000 before it packed up shop in March 1996. The venture got me in contact with a lot of pen-pals and a lot of small-press publications, and it gave me a taste for editing.

Editor was a title I often contemplated. Regarding Natalie with much favor, I nevertheless would grow annoyed when she would misspell a word or cut a story in half and leave it dangling until the next issue. Some of her practices, while consistent with publishing norms, lacked a certain panache, in my opinion. Additionally, over time I began to refrain from reading many of the stories in these small publications. Why did I stop reading the stories but continue to love the magazines? It wasn't the story that intrigued me, I found, but the author behind the work. Hence my own project, *Nation*, was born three years ago.

The best way to describe *Nation* is to think of it as a *National Geographic* about people, not places. The magazine has grown into a wonderful entity that, if it continues to grow as planned, could very well become my post-college career. Of course, Natalie is a regular writer in *Nation*. In fact, she is the only individual to have written for every single issue.

Nation, *a bimonthly magazine for both schoolers and unschoolers, is available from Peter Kowalke, PO Box 772, Mentor OH 44061; email NationHQ@aol.com. Issues are $2.95 each or $15/yr.* ◆

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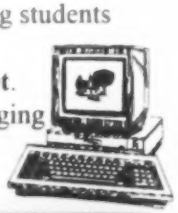

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Challenges & Concerns

Comparing Oneself to Others

Janet Henningsen of Colorado writes:

My oldest child, Jacob, is 7. We had a friend of his over at Easter time to color Easter eggs with us. This friend is 8 and goes to school; he's in second grade. Jacob doesn't read yet, and his friend was not only reading directions but was spelling words for Jacob and printing messages on his eggs in very legible writing. Jacob's writing is prehistoric in comparison.

Jacob was having a grand old time. I was feeling more inadequate by the moment. By the time his friend left, I was sure my son would never spell, read, or write, and that it would all be my fault because I didn't force him to learn. Hello – I have been reading GWS for 6 years, but its words of wisdom were temporarily gone.

Gathering my wits about me, I quickly decided that it was time to institute structure. I decided to introduce spelling as a daily part of our routine: a word a day of Jacob's choice. I was proud of my decision because in one simple lesson I could cover reading, writing, and spelling. I was very enthusiastic to begin. Jacob was willing to try it out. Day one came, and he chose "bug" as his word. I wrote it out for him to read and copy. He copied it once, and then while writing it a second time he began to lose interest. Any interest he had in my plans were gone by the time I forced him to write the word a third time. We stopped and I began to remember some of what I have read in GWS.

Day two arrived and again I was eager to begin. Jacob humored me. He chose the word "done" and wrote it several times on his own and then moved on to something else that had captured his interest. He did not want to go back and practice his word from day one. Repetition obviously meant nothing to this child.

Day three came and I found myself trying to motivate *myself* for Jacob's lesson – in order to motivate him! Lacking all enthusiasm, he humored me and chose the word "one." He wrote it once and then scowled at me as I "encouraged" him to write it again. He hunched over his paper and wrote his first sentence ever for me: "I am done." Yes, I did get the message and we no longer practice spelling *my* way. It is clear to me that when the need arises he can indeed express himself adequately!

Trying Not to Worry about Reading

Leslie Beckett of Maryland writes:

I've meant to write many times, but was prompted to sit down and do it today because I just read John Holt's essay in GWS #44, "Reading at 12." Of all the pieces I've read on the subject of late reading, this one really spoke to my condition.

My daughter Carmen is an only child, nearly 10, with no desire to read. I'd love to say how confident I am that she'll be just fine, but that would only be half the story. I do have confident days, but I also have dreadful doubting days. I have a wonderful friend who faithfully lends her issues of GWS to me and makes it a point to pass along any articles about late reading that she finds elsewhere (on my bad days I figure that's easy for her to do since all three of her children read well above grade level).

Fortunately, since an unschool support group formed locally, I find myself having fewer and fewer of the doubting days. Carmen and I keep busy with so many other things that there simply isn't time to worry. Recently, however I had a real crisis of confidence. I met a woman with whom I felt I had much in common: ideas, interests, educational philosophies, late-reading daughters. Because their family had decided to pursue vision

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therapy and laterality re-patterning to facilitate reading. I started to worry that maybe I wasn't trying hard enough to help Carmen. (I had looked into these methods some time ago, but had postponed any action because the methods seemed too intrusive for Carmen's learning style.) Once I get into the doubting groove, though, I can really get stuck in it, making myself and everyone around me miserable.

Naturally it was Carmen who set me straight again. I was talking with her about the laterality re-patterning, trying to convince her that we should give it a try. She finally said, "I like my brain the way it works now, Mom. I just don't want to read." Since then, I've backed off, but have been torturing myself over the inevitable question, "*Why* doesn't she want to read?" John Holt's essay helped me understand a possible reason through his analogy of stepping out of an unwinnable race until the field moves out of sight and there is no context of competition. That may or may not be Carmen's reason. She can't or won't articulate her reasons for choosing not to read now. Like the girls Holt describes in his essay, however, she is bright, happy, and well-adjusted. She is an astute auditory learner who, I hope, will decide to read one day soon. Meanwhile, for me, even though I embrace the concept of child-led learning, trust is a work in process.

Our most recent feature on late readers was the Focus in GWS #115, "Late Readers Turn Out OK."

Unschooling: Philosophy or Learning Style?

Cindy Gaddis (KY) writes:

I am writing in response to the letter from Carolyn Ellis in the Challenges and Concerns section of GWS #117. Carolyn's struggle over accepting her oldest daughter Mary's learning style and her subsequent "reassurance" that her "other children are all happy unschoolers" raised my philosophical questioning nature again. It made me wonder what the definition of unschooling is.

My definition (at this moment) is following the lead of my child, whether it be in interests or in learning style, and giving respect thereto. I know that many definitions of unschooling include allowing a child to learn in his natural environment and context (learning fractions from cooking, measuring from building, science in the backyard, etc.) as well as learning out in the real world (volunteering, apprenticing, working, etc.). However, as Carolyn discovered about her daughter Mary and as I have certainly discovered about some of my own children, not every child enjoys learning in that hands-on way – or, as in the case of my son Adam, may be limited by neurologic biology (autism) in his ability to learn naturally from his environment. And how about a child who in his elementary school years enjoyed learning in natural contexts but subsequently chooses a substantial increase in structure? Are all of these learners not considered unschoolers now?

I believe we would be doing a grave disservice to the origins of unschooling if we defined it as a particular learning style such as "real-world learning." Wouldn't that make us just as guilty as traditional schooling of implying that one style is better than another? With such a belief, the educator or facilitator will always be trying to correct, impose, or direct the learner toward this supposedly optimal style, even if it is not the style to which the child naturally inclines.

I declare myself an unschooler even though my daughter Abbey loves workbooks and my son Adam has to be taught most things in a highly structured manner. I say this because I am respecting their need to learn in the way that works best for them. I would declare an older homeschooler who decides to become much more structured in learning an unschooler because she is respecting her ability to know what she needs and wants at each stage of her life. I would declare Carolyn's daughter Mary an unschooler because she refused to be forced to abandon her learning nature. Carolyn finally was able to respect Mary's right to be who she was, thus accepting her learning style as viable. What Carolyn may not have figured out yet is that

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Mary's learning preference is not a lesser form compared to her other children's preference for learning from the activities that fit her definition of unschooling.

Is unschooling an educational philosophy or just another learning style that some kids will be grouped into? If it is the first, then I am an unschooler. If it is the latter, then I must call myself a self-led learner with an interest-based curriculum. This way, I could be any type of learner that my nature or desires incline me to be. What other names would represent this educational philosophy: freedom learner? self-determinator? self-learner? autodidact? I look forward to hearing from other GWS readers on this topic.

More on Doing Nothing

From Rebecca Auerbach of California:

I was glad to see GWS #117 acknowledge the importance of doing nothing. I love to write and have found that thinking time is essential for me to do so. My writing grows out of the thoughts I have when I seem to be staring into space or occupied with some mindless game or chore. At first, I have no plan to write those thoughts down. I might start by remembering what some Senator said that morning about welfare reform. Perhaps it reminds me of something another Senator said last week, and I wonder whether their ideas could be combined. Days or weeks later, having devoted much of my time to thinking about welfare reform, I arrive at a conclusion in which I have confidence. Only then do I think of writing my ideas down.

I used to take the thinking stage of writing for granted. In my homeschooling, I wrote when and what I chose, and I never considered writing about things I had not thought through. When, last year, I began taking college English classes (for high school credit), I suddenly needed to do something I found strange: deliberately give myself time in which to think. Given one week in which to write an essay about a book that I had only just finished reading, the amount of thinking time that would naturally occur was not enough.

There was only one thing for me to do. I would say, "I have to work on my essay," and shut myself in my room. Then I would do nothing. Though I would flip through the book a bit and perhaps jot down a few notes, I spent most of my time sitting on my bed, thinking. After spending an entire afternoon this way, I would have no more to show than a half page of messily scrawled notes. Yet I have accomplished something that would prove invaluable when I retreated to my room again the next day, this time to write: I had decided what to say.

And from Marion Cohen (PA):

It was interesting to see the Focus "In Defense of Doing Nothing" in GWS #117, and I really liked Susannah Sheffer's metaphor, in her editorial, about the spaces between the trees. I wanted to re-emphasize what Nathan Post said about how sometimes he *actually* does nothing. I think that if, when parents and other adults look at kids and see them doing nothing and then think, "No, they're not really doing nothing, they're really getting ideas about such-and-such" – in other words, if there are expectations, however low-key, then the whole purpose of doing nothing can be defeated. It's as if, once again, adults have agendas.

I think it's really important to try to feel comfortable with the fact that there are times, in kids' and adults' lives, to do nothing or to do things which we know might amount to nothing. We need to trust ourselves to do nothing, to give ourselves permission to do nothing. In fact, perhaps it's our responsibility to recognize when it's do-nothing time and to act (or not act!) accordingly.

I also believe that periods of doing nothing could conceivably be longer than a few hours or days. They could be a year, or years. Maybe even an entire childhood. Yes, I believe that it's possible to spend a childhood doing nothing and then do things in adulthood (or vice-versa). There are not only spaces between trees but spaces between planets, and in general, there is more space than matter.

My family specifically incorporates doing nothing into our lives; that is, we all, together, spend whole afternoons or days doing nothing. My son Bret often says, "Mom, can we all go hang out on your bed?" Although I, too, often feel uncomfortable or nervous letting go and doing nothing, I also realize that this feeling is mostly societal, or psychological, or habitual, and I'm determined not to let it ruin things for me or for my kids (that is, I'm *determined* to do nothing).

The idea of hanging out or doing nothing *together* seems to me very significant. In our society, families may say, "We try to take time out to smell the flowers," but by "time" they seem to mean a very small amount of time, often a scant hour a week, and by "flowers" they often seem to mean something like a field trip to some forest or meadow.

Doing nothing together makes a statement; it says, "No, we don't love one another only for what we do, but for what we are – or *that* we are." It also says, "We don't love one another for what we will become, but for what we are now." Doing nothing together does wonders for the spirit of unconditional love. ◆

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GWS Celebrates!
Scenes from our 20th Anniversary Conference
August 8–10th in Waltham, Mass.

Meeting Each Other

At the Friday night opening reception, and throughout the weekend, homeschoolers had a chance to meet and talk.

Lynette Tarkington (MA) listens to John Gatto

Donna Nichols-White of The Drinking Gourd (right) and Day Farenga, Conference Coordinator

Karl Bunday of Minnesota and Kyoko Aizawa of Japan

Mark Hegener of Home Education Magazine *talks with Linda Dobson, author of* The Art of Education

A young attendee enjoys dessert at the reception

Jerry Mintz (left) of the Alternative Education Resource Organization talks with Joshua Hornick of the Pathfinder Learning Center

David and Micki Colfax give the keynote speech, above, and, at left, conduct a question-and-answer workshop

Above, the Grown-Up Homeschoolers Panel: l-r, Tad Heuer, Amanda Bergson-Shilcock, Mae Shell

Below, three members of the Veterans' Panel: l-r, Nancy Plent, Katharine Houk, Seth Rockmuller

Mae Shell, one of the grown-up homeschoolers panelists, wrote to us after the conference:

The conference was so incredible for me, I'm not even sure I can put into words what I got out of it, what I'm still assimilating (and will be for a long time), and how affirmed and truly lucky I feel to have been a part of this wonderful event. The entire weekend, I felt as if I was floating, supported by the love, compassion, values, and respect of everyone there.

I was quite nervous before the panel, never having spoken to such a large audience before and certainly not from behind a microphone. But after about three minutes up there, I realized that, as the fictional character of Samantha said in *Samantha Learns a Lesson*: "It is easy to speak in front of people, even a lot of people, if you truly believe in what you are saying." I would add that it helps to have an audience who for the most part is on your side. It's like the first time down a long slide; now I can't wait for the chance to do it again!

And then at the end of the weekend, I had tears in my eyes during the tribute to John Holt as I realized a thousand things at once. Most of all, I was suddenly incredibly aware, and in turn appreciative, of how much courage my parents (and so many like them) must have had to stand by their ideals in the face of widespread criticism, and without having any notion where those ideals would take them. This is something I don't often think of, because for the most part my parents have always trusted me completely and stood back until I initiated the need for resources, answers, and guidance. Because this trust had been in place since I was born, it never occurred to me to wonder how difficult and exhilarating this must have been for them. I think it's truly amazing how, in many ways, it was this one man whose convictions and writings were able to give my parents and so many others a base of ideals, and fed their courage so that they were able to follow through on their convictions in the face of so much opposition. John Holt, just one person in a million others, really and truly started an educational revolution.

So many of the worries that I often hear beginning unschooling parents obsessing over, which previously seemed silly or trivial to me, suddenly made sense during the weekend; I was viewing the unschooling revolution from every conceivable vantage point, starting with the youngest children and going all the way up to myself and the other grown unschoolers. In one single instant, it all made sense, and I understood that without the perspective of those who lived and learned through the whole experience, those who are just starting out in unschooling have no way of knowing if it really does work - with only their ideals and hearts to guide them, even as it is probably exhilarating, I'm sure it is also scary as well. Realizing all of this at once was a very intense feeling, and I know that I will carry it around with me in some way for a long time and maybe for the rest of my life.

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Workshops and Discussions

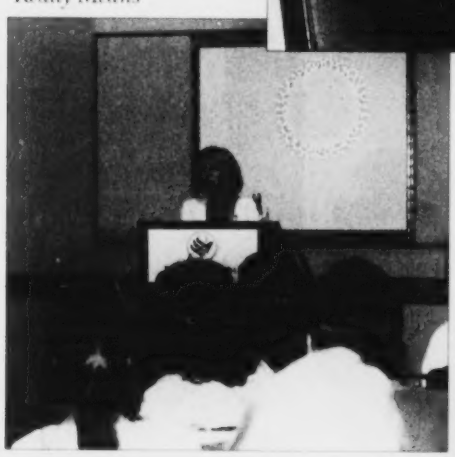
At left: Amy and David Mantell, "Unschooling Math"

Above: Manfred Smith (far right) facilitates a discussion among fathers

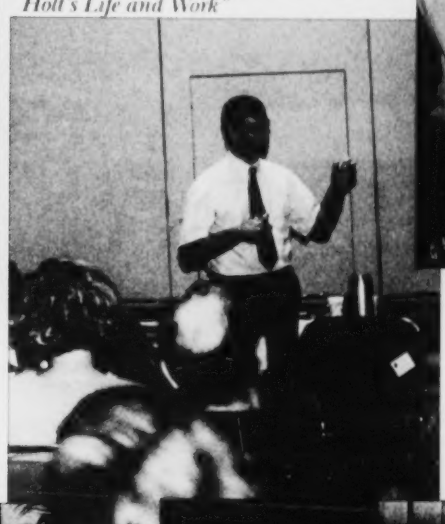
left: Madalene Murphy, "Science Options for the Teenage Homeschooler"

Below: Susannah Sheffer speaks about "Myths of Unschooling: What Freedom Really Means"

Below: Michelle and Alan Shaw (and kids), "Living, Working, and Learning as a Family"



Below: Pat Farenga speaks about "John Holt's Life and Work"



Below: Mark Hegener (right) and Larry Kaseman (at Mark's left) lead a discussion on Challenges to the Homeschool Movement

Below: The teenagers' discussion session

Children's Activities

At left: Enjoying the Museum of Science's Workshop together

Blowing bubbles!

Day Farenga (right) and Dawn Lease

Book Signings

Below: John Gatto signs Dumbing Us Down

Above: Cafi Cohen signs And What About College?

Left: Children's Dance Workshop

I want to thank all of you who made the effort to come to our 20th anniversary conference. Many of you traveled long distances; twenty states were represented, plus Canada, England, and Japan.

Dawn and I greatly appreciate the help many of you gave us (for discount and just out of generosity). After 11 months of work, it was thrilling to us to see the gathering grow to over 700 attendees, to watch adults taking notes during the workshops, parents and children peering into microscopes together in the Museum of Science's session, families enjoying the Greathall and living history shows, and teens discussing their lives with one another. We want to thank the speakers, many of whom traveled long distances to be part of the event, and their families who came with them and supported them.

We're delighted that the conference sold out, but we apologize for the fact that that made for crowded conditions in some of the workshop rooms (the hotel had also misled us, in some cases, about how many people the rooms could hold). We also apologize for running out of books in the bookstore – we did not anticipate selling more books at this event than we had sold at all the other conferences we've attended this year combined!

We're pleased to have had most of the sessions audiotaped, and these are available for sale (see back cover). We hope to have a few videotapes available as well.

As I put in the long hours of the weekend, I was heartened to see smiles and hear sincere thanks from so many people. **You all are a wonderful bunch of people to work for. All of the evaluations we've received have been very helpful, inspiring improvements for future** conferences. — Dav Farenga

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Focus

Hard Times at Home – Is Homeschooling Still Possible?

Homeschooling During Parents' Divorce

A reader writes:

I didn't expect 1996 to include a separation or divorce in our family, but it did. The one thing that allowed our lives to move forward and enabled the kids to adjust and heal was the fact that we have homeschooled for years.

The amount of stress connected with a father leaving the household is immeasurable, and the pain and grief can be overwhelming for everyone, even the father. The fact that the kids and I were already so close from our years of homeschooling and that they looked to me for guidance instead of primarily to their peers allowed me to help them through this transition. Life did come to a halt in many ways while we sorted out the settlement and tried to adjust to a visitation schedule. I found myself more distracted and distant than usual from the kids' daily lives. The kids, in turn, chose to forego certain activities which they had enjoyed in the past. But they had the chance to sleep (a very healing activity) and read and think and grieve without the added stress of having to go to school each day.

I watched each of them slowly sort through their lives in different ways. Being so close to them and knowing each of them so well helped me see pretty quickly when one needed some outside help. We coped with the divorce in much the same way we deal with every aspect of our homeschooling lives: something needs to be done, we figure out how to do that, and then we forge ahead. I feel blessed that we have the freedom to put things on hold (like math) when life kicks in full force. I could never understand how someone could go to school when their grandparent had just died and actually learn anything. Or how a kid with a seriously ill parent could concentrate on schoolwork. Or why people even think they should be able to do so. Why do we think it is healthy for kids in a stressful situation to maintain their usual schedule and activities? Watching my kids come through this – first, as I said, choosing to pull back from some of their activities and then to return to their own lives and interests as things settled down to a new routine – was wonderful. I've raised strong kids. They were able to confront their feelings, communicate, and then move back into their own lives with much less disruption than if I'd suddenly stuck them in school or if they had had to go to school and pretend that nothing was happening at home.

One of my kids took such good care of me during this time that my marriage counselor was concerned that it would become a habit. I looked at it a little differently. Since I knew that I was struggling with my own depression and that this was a new situation for the children to witness, I felt that it was not inappropriate for them to show care and concern for me. At that point, they didn't need to "get on with their lives" but rather to sort out this new life they had been handed. I also knew that my state of mind was not permanent and that therefore it would become safe for the kids once again to be self-centered. I am so disgusted with how society views these things. Why is it bad to be compassionate and loving? Seeing these traits in my kids gave me the strength to pull myself together so that I could be there for them. In a way, we all healed together and slowly returned to all those life projects.

I didn't have to face a custody battle, nor was homeschooling ever an issue except in the context of whether or not I would have to work. The fact that I had homeschooled the kids for so long actually worked to my advantage, as even my ex-husband's lawyer could see that it would be unfair to ask us to change that situation abruptly. Although I do work a little now, my ex-husband pays enough support for us to be able to finish the kids' homeschooling. So these factors made the divorce less acrimonious than it could have been. It's never pleasant, but the kids watched us work out a settlement that worked for all of us – a good lesson and one which I hope they never have to apply to their own lives.

I think that as homeschoolers we really undervalue the worth of what we do. We are not only educating our kids; we are giving them tools and setting examples for dealing with real-life issues. How do we cope when Dad leaves, or Grandma dies, or the dog gets hit by a car? Since the kids are with us through all of life's traumas, we have the opportunity to demonstrate wholesome responses. We also have the responsibility to be the kinds of people we want our kids to emulate.

I would never have chosen this divorce, but I am grateful for having the chance to deal with it while homeschooling. Sometimes when I would feel depressed or overwhelmed, I would simply read with one of my kids. It's amazing how good one can get at reading words while

thinking about something else! Slowly my attention would be pulled to the book and to the kid snuggling up against me. Nothing needed to be said. We were there together. They know I will not leave, so their shaken world can recover from the quake and return to a feeling of security.

They also watched as so many of my friends stepped more fully into their lives. In a way, I felt that some of our friends took over my homeschooling responsibilities; they took the kids places, made a point of conversing about all sorts of things, really went out of their way to check in with all of us. The love was overwhelming. The kids' ability to relate so fully and comfortably with adults is another benefit to homeschooling, and it really paid off this year.

We are all moving on with our lives. While I know that the divorce will make a difference in the kids' lives, homeschooling has had a much deeper and more profound effect.

Coping with Father's Illness and Death

From Linda Butler (UT):

My five children have been homeschooled since they were born. We have successfully homeschooled through moves, unemployment, severe illness, and the death of my husband. I'll focus on the latter two, since that's what we are currently struggling with.

My husband passed away in November 1996. He had been ill and was on kidney dialysis, yet his death (at home) was sudden, catastrophic, and very unexpected. We are still adjusting.

This crisis began in April 1989 when Steve was sent home from work. He had looked "funny" for a couple of days and had felt quite fatigued. He was diagnosed with "Non-A Non-B Hepatitis," a very serious disease. Within three weeks he declined from healthy to near death. A liver transplant was his only hope. At the time we had three children; the oldest daughter was 8, the second daughter had her 6th birthday during this ordeal, and our son was 21 months.

Steve had the liver transplant that May and was in the hospital for about a month. The hospital was about an hour's drive from our home. I went to the hospital almost daily and took the older children once or twice a week. My parents came and stayed with us, which really helped, and when they left, friends and neighbors took turns caring for the kids while I was gone. I felt torn in half: part of me needed to see Steve, to verify that he was alive and recovering. Part of me needed to be the mom with kids that I always had been. The kids' education at that time consisted of learning a lot about hospitals, health, sickness, etc. I remember thinking that homeschooling was really a blessing, because we could "go with the flow" of this medical emergency. It didn't disrupt our lives as it likely would have if the kids had been in school. It completely rearranged our lives, but we were able to deal with it.

The next major crisis occurred about two years ago when Steve was to receive treatment for the Hepatitis which was slowly destroying his new liver. By this time we had lived in the same town for eight years and had many connections with people. We now had 5 children who ranged from 5 to 13 years. One friend said that she would watch and teach my children for whatever time I needed to be with Steve. As it turned out, he was able to receive the treatment on an outpatient basis and we were able to continue our homeschooling with very little modification.

Last summer, my husband's health again began to decline markedly. He was barely able to get himself to work. After several brief hospitalizations, it was necessary for him to be on kidney dialysis. Three times a week for three hours he was hooked up to a kidney machine. He was gone a lot. The kids missed him, and he didn't have much energy when he was home. One thing he was always able to do was hold the kids; he had a huge recliner that even a teenager could snuggle up in with him. He gave an enormous amount of emotional strength and energy to his children simply by holding them. He would listen to them read to him (his eyesight had been affected and he was unable to read small print).

That fall, I agonized over what I should do with the kids. I knew that sending them to school was out of the question, since their lives were already in a lot of turmoil. For the past two years, we had been homeschooling together with another family one or two mornings a week. We had done a sort of "unit study" together, covering astronomy, journalism (the kids publish a newsletter), and the medieval period (which I wrote about in GWS #114). We decided to stay with "BC School," as we called our co-op with this other family, and it and the kids' music and gymnastics lessons were great for us during this difficult period. We had these excellent reasons to get ourselves moving. When the co-op decided to study Ancient Greece, we dove into it with a vengeance. It was one way for me to escape all the fear and turmoil; it was something concrete and positive to think about and work on. My oldest daughter spent an enormous amount of time studying and "escaping" in a similar manner.

Because of homeschooling, we were again able to go with the flow, but the flow came to an abrupt stop when I found Steve lying on the bed and blue. After I called 911 and administered CPR, paramedics took him to the hospital where he was pronounced dead shortly thereafter. We were devastated and in shock. Somehow we managed to get through the next couple of weeks. It was the holiday season, so we pretty much dropped homeschooling activities except for reading, math, and music, which the kids continued out of force of habit. Holiday traditions from past years kept us going, probably because we did them with our friends from the co-op group. If left on my own, I probably would have canceled baking cookies and making homemade calendars that year.

We spent January and February trying to get back on our feet and did not do any cooperative school. By March we were able to get back to a more regular schedule. We studied Ancient Rome and did the newsletter. The kids were OK. The hearts weren't quite as into the projects, but they weren't really excited about much of anything then. My oldest daughter and I both realized that we had been

so enthusiastic about our history classes in the fall because they had been an escape. We were smart enough to realize this and to allow ourselves some leeway now. The other family didn't seem critical of our lesser performance and presentation. Completing this course of study was a healing step for all of us.

So now it is August, nine months after Steve's death. We are able to continue homeschooling. Because of Steve's life insurance and Social Security, I will be able to stay home with the kids for the next three years at the very least. We have had a fairly substantial reduction in income and have had to be careful with our finances. We now do a lot of trading for the kids' lessons, so they have been able to continue with most of them. We have swapped books and a violin for their violin and piano lessons. We clean the gym where my children work out every week which covers about a third of the gymnastics tuition. The older girls, now teenagers, teach the younger ones violin and viola. My oldest daughter teaches about a half dozen viola students.

We have found ourselves on essentially uncharted waters. I have not read much about widows or widowers or even divorced parents with a large number of children who are still able to homeschool. Most single parents who continue to homeschool seem to have relatively small families.

However, we have not had to go it alone. There are some wonderful homeschoolers in our area who have made great sacrifice to their own families to provide us with a wonderful Christmas. At various times throughout this past year, a homeschooling family has called us or brought us a hot dinner, theater tickets, a haircut, bowling coupons – wonderful gifts that remind us we are loved and that have made our lives just a little nicer.

Some of the things I have learned and am still learning:

During family illness, take time to figure out and set your priorities. Avoid burdening yourself with guilt. Don't go overboard in trying to make your kids' lives normal if you are not living in a normal situation; simply do the best you can with what you have and where you are.

We found that having an established schedule made life easier. The kids knew what to expect and when. This is important when you're in a situation in which your life is taking many unexpected turns. It was especially helpful when someone was tending the children while I was away at the hospital; the kids knew what they were to do and the caregiver knew what to expect of the children. Responding to the force of habit was actually rather comforting after Steve's death. It gave us a step when we began wondering, "What do we do now?"

If you're caring for someone with a chronic or lengthy illness and teaching your children, there will be other things that will not get done. You may have to cut back on outside activities or on housekeeping. The children may have to spend more time doing "practical living skills" than "academics." If people offer to help, don't be too proud to accept. This is one place that I fell short during the hepatitis that led up to the transplant. I valued our privacy so highly that I did not let neighbors or friends know how serious Steve's situation was. Since his death, I have been better about accepting help. However, I have also had to be clear and adamant about allowing the children to do the many things that need to be done around here. They must not be cheated out of the opportunity to "rise to the occasion" and help solve our family's problems by working together.

I've had to be strong for the kids. It has also been good, on occasion, to allow them to see my weakness; I just have to be careful not to frighten or overwhelm them. I have found attending a bereavement support group to be a very healing thing. Honesty and communication with my children and with relatives and friends has been the key to coping with and adapting to our new situation.

If you are the only adult in the home, be sure to reach out and communicate with other adults. I love being around my children, but I also need to spend time with a few of my own peers. My husband and I had a wonderful relationship wherein we could discuss anything. I sorely miss

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this. I still feel out of balance because I no longer have my companion who was equally and vitally interested in the children. It is a hole that is within me; it is partially filled by a few special relatives and friends who take time to listen and talk with me. I especially appreciate being able to discuss various educational ideas and concerns with friends who share similar views.

Lastly, don't be afraid to consider and confront some of the scary things that are part of life. Chances are that most families with growing children will not have to face a period of long-term illness, and chances are even less that you will have to face the death of a family member. But these monsters do haunt some of us. I recommend talking with your spouse and children; talk about the steps you have taken to provide for their care. My children have been read portions of my will which states specifically who will care for them should something happen to me. This is not meant to frighten them but to reassure them that they will never, ever be left alone. This kind of planning and communication is actually quite empowering. It can give you armor against those unknown monsters.

Coping with long-term illness can be frightening and exhausting. Losing a spouse is an absolute nightmare. Raising kids even within a "standard" family is difficult. Raising kids alone is a formidable challenge. But it is possible to do it, and do it well.

Dealing with Parents' Troubled Backgrounds

From Beth Volinski of Maryland:

We have been homeschooling for five years. We have two children: Vinnie, age 12, and Amber, age 9, and we also have a foster child right now, Raymond, age 7.

My husband Vince comes from a background of much abuse and neglect, poverty, mental illness, and alcoholism. By the age of 16 he began experimenting with drugs. He dropped out of school in 11th grade to work to help stabilize his family's income. I too come from a very difficult family background. I grew up without my mother from age 2 on; I was severely sexually abused from age 5 to 14; I smoked at 9 and was drug-addicted by the age of 13. I miraculously graduated from high school.

At the time, particularly in high school, I thought school was my haven; it was one of the only sane places in my life. I was in the band and in sports, and I was able to expand myself and find myself outside of my family. As I look back on it now, I see, first of all, that there are other ways I could have achieved the same thing – after all, as homeschoolers my kids are involved in music and sports now, and have other adults besides us in their lives. I also have to remind myself that often, when things were bad at home, and particularly when I was in middle school, I couldn't focus on my schoolwork anyway. There were times when I should have done better on a test than I did, but I couldn't concentrate.

It seems to me now that if I had been homeschooling, my parents would have had to face their issues instead of just using school as an escape. It's too easy, when you know your kids shouldn't be around you, to send them to school instead of working to change things so that the home is a better place and you become better parents. That's what homeschooling our own kids ultimately allowed, or forced, me and my husband to do.

Vince was 27 and I 22 when we met at a junkie house where you can buy drugs, shoot up, and socialize with other junkies. This was our lifestyle. After we realized we were in love – what little we knew about love! – we decided to end the hard drugs. This was not an easy process, of course. I stopped more easily than Vince did.

I give this background so that you can get an idea of the major stresses we were dealing with as a new family when our first child was born. My husband's drug addiction remained constant until three years ago. It is still a struggle for him but gets easier day by day. I have been clean for five years and sober for seven. We have been through a course for domestic violence through SARC (sexual-spousal assault resource and counseling) in Maryland. We now volunteer with and direct other people to this resource. I have educated myself on sexual abuse, drug addiction, marriage, parenting, religion, co-dependency, how to be organized financially, etc.

Homeschooling forced me to become the kind of parent I needed to be for homeschooling to work.

My husband is now a wonderful husband, father, and friend. He builds concrete swimming pools, which is very hard physical labor. He taught himself different aspects of the business and is now the highest paid employee in his company.

I took our son Vinnie out of school the second week of second grade. He got lost at lunch and no one ever noticed. He was a perfectionist and would not do his work because it had to be perfect, or he would erase it a hundred times. His teacher decided he had a learning disability and needed to be more controlled. From my past abuse experiences, the idea of a teacher getting control of my son did not sit well with me. During this time, my son began wetting the bed and having nightmares about a witch.

A dear friend of mine had homeschooled through The Learning Community, a satellite program in Maryland, and I began to educate myself about this intriguing topic. During this same time, when I was beginning to learn about homeschooling, my husband and I were beginning to make the major changes in our lives that I have described. I knew that Vinnie's previous environment had much to do with his perfectionism and his low self-esteem. I called Manfred Smith of The Learning Community and talked with him about the possibility of homeschooling Vinnie. My main concern was my husband's drug use, our messed up lives, and how Vinnie could possibly benefit from being home with screwed up parents. Manfred's reply

was that a child who had suffered from this type of lifestyle would often be better off outside of the school environment which often compounds the already existing problems. Of course, I had explained to Manfred our goals of being a decent family and being open to learning new skills so that we could become better parents. This was very important, and if I hadn't made this clear, I can imagine that Manfred might not have been so encouraging of the idea of our homeschooling.

When I removed Vinnie from school, many people thought I had lost my mind. Who was I, with my problems, to think that I could teach my child? Even my husband was totally against homeschooling, especially considering all the changes that were necessary for us to feel comfortable with our children around us all the time. But for me, having my children at home forced me to grow without schooling. Homeschooling forced me to become the kind of parent I needed to be for homeschooling to work. When my kids were in school, I could do whatever I wanted, including taking drugs. That's how it felt to me. But now I knew that if I were making a commitment to homeschooling, my children's health and safety were the most important things, so I had to change my whole life. If I told Vinnie that we were going to read together every day, I had to do it. I had to go the library, and I had to make sure to go to my therapy appointments, to take care of myself.

Though I was nervous about homeschooling, I read as much about it as I could and talked to as many people as possible, and what made me take the risk and do it was that my son was counting on it, because school was horrible for him. That's what made my husband give in, too, because he saw how much happier our son was once he was home.

Anyone who gets to know our family now has a very hard time imagining the way we were before, but I know how far we've come. My children are wonderful and well-educated about the ills of our society and their causes and about ways to overcome adversity despite your background or your formal education. Even though we've changed tremendously, I'm always evaluating the family and myself. I never just assume everything is OK; we're constantly looking at ourselves, and I think that's our safeguard, that's what helps us be sure that homeschooling continues to be the right choice and healthy for our family. The foster care we do now helps to keep us focused, and so does our volunteer work, and our church, which is a big part of who we are now. Our children could talk to people in the church if they needed to talk to someone else about their family. But it's also important that the kids feel they can talk to us directly. My kids keep me in line; they tell me how they feel, and they're not afraid to say, "Stop yelling at me" if they need to. Homeschooling was what prompted me to change, and now it's what helps me stay on track and be the kind of parent I want to be. ◆

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Taking Charge of My Education

How homeschooling ideas helped a student in school

Chris Davis, who recently joined the Holt Associates staff, writes:

In August of 1995 I was preparing to enter my final year of high school, a school that was recognized as one of the best public high schools in the state. I believed I needed to get excellent grades and continue taking top level courses so that I would be able to get into a prestigious college and later get a good job.

I had decided to graduate high school early, in January rather than June of the coming year. My mother had suggested the idea and had worked with me to see how it could be done. I had made the decision to graduate early because I knew I disliked school and I wanted to leave it, or at least get a break from it, as soon as I could. But even though I disliked school, I still believed it was necessary for a good life. I knew I would be able to find something to do with my time outside of school, but I also felt secure knowing that my high school grades and high level classes would put me in a good position for going to the college of my choice.

My thinking soon changed. The week before my senior year began, I accidentally came across *The Teenage Liberation Handbook: How to Quit School and Get a Real Life and Education* by Grace Llewellyn. When I first glanced at the cover, I thought that the author was crazy and that the book was a joke. Fortunately, my mom offered to buy me the book as long as I agreed to read it, since she was very intrigued by the title (she is often open to different ideas that are not commonly accepted). I opened the book in the car on the way home, and began a journey that completely changed my life.

I had never really questioned anything before, but after reading the book, I immediately started questioning everything my teachers would say about what I needed to do and what was best for me and for others like myself. I frequently heard teachers talk to students about how they needed to improve their grades, listen to what the teacher was saying instead of talking with other students, and do everything they were told to do. One time a teacher even told me that she thought it was beneficial for students to stay up until one or two in the morning studying for tests and doing homework!

I had never thought about what kind of life I wanted to live, because, in and out of school, I rarely had any time to think about what was important to me. I was either following orders imposed by adults or doing dull busywork. But as I began to reflect, I soon realized that most of the experiences that made up *me*, and from which I learned and grew the most, had occurred outside of school, during vacations. During my high school years I had spent summers going to Seattle for a bike camp, volunteering with vacation Bible school as a gym teacher, living in Paraguay for six weeks, and working as a lifeguard. In these situations, I discovered that I could control my learning and that I did not have to depend on school and teachers in order to learn. As each summer came to an end, I could feel and see how much I had grown into a more mature, confident, independent, and intelligent person, but as soon as I stepped back into the school building, I immediately felt as if nothing had changed. The building looked the same, the people seemed to be the same, and the classes were not much different from the year before.

I started to believe that I almost had a split personality: outside of school, I enjoyed playing, talking, joking, and having fun, whereas inside school I hardly ever smiled and I only spoke a few times each day. I never had any friends during all my years of school to whom I was as close as I was to the friends I made during vacations. I felt I was losing my life, because I spent most of my days living as this person that didn't feel like the true me.

As I've said, I had for a long time believed that grades and assignments were important. I believed that to be intelligent, I needed to do well on each and every assignment or test, whether or not I cared about what I was doing or forgot it the next day. Occasionally I had doubts, but I pushed those feelings down. Now, though, as I started realizing that my real feelings about school were valid, I began to believe in myself more. I became increasingly able to speak up in school and say that I disagreed with something. In school that final semester, I mostly continued to follow the routine and do most of what I was supposed to do, but instead of hating it and not trusting myself, I knew that it was fine if I wanted to skip some homework, or mold an assignment around my interests, or save some of my energy to follow some of my own interests that weren't part of the curriculum. I tried to be as discreet as

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possible about my beliefs in front of my teachers, because I did want to treat them with respect, but there were a few times when I felt I needed to say something, so I would just say that I disagreed or didn't feel that the matter was as important as the teacher felt it was.

Because I no longer put as much emphasis on getting good grades, I would look over my assigned homework each night and decide what was most important and worth doing. If an assignment didn't feel useful or meaningful, I would just skip it, especially if I didn't have time for it. Free of the worry about grades, I didn't have to fear being penalized for skipping an assignment. I was gradually developing other ways to evaluate myself, besides grades. I now look at how I feel about what I'm doing, I seek out responses from people I like and respect, and I compare how I'm doing something now with how I did it in the past.

One of my classes that last semester was AP English, and the biggest project in the class aside from the AP exam itself was a research paper on three works of literature. As I (on my own time) read more and more of John Holt, I thought that it would be really interesting and worthwhile for me to write down some of the things I was learning and questioning. I asked the teacher if I could write the research paper on John Holt. This was clearly a departure from the assignment, because I would be writing about non-fiction rather than the expected fictional works. Also, because I was going to graduate early and the paper was scheduled to be due several weeks after I would be gone, I had to create my own deadlines to finish the paper early. I ended up writing about both Holt's work and Llewellyn's, and it was one of the most exciting things I ever did in school. I was pleased at the end when I got a note back from my teacher saying in part that she was not going to grade the paper.

I was fortunate in all this to have parents who supported me and believed in my ability to make decisions for myself. After graduating in January, I spent a few weeks just relaxing at home and going skiing, and then I went to Thailand for five weeks. I traveled alone and met my grandparents in Chiang Mai, where I spent a few days a week volunteering at an International School. My grandmother also introduced me to a woman who was a member of the Lahu hill tribe. She took me on a three-day trip with an Akha woman and man (Akha is another hill tribe). We went to two Akha villages to teach tribal people about basic health care and specifically about AIDS. The trip was an amazing experience, and I was able to make friends even with the two of my traveling companions who didn't speak English.

Back home in April, I followed my interests mainly through reading, and I also worked as a lifeguard. I read mostly about homeschooling, alternative education, and learning. I decided to attend an alternative college that fall, the Friends World Program, which is affiliated with Long Island University. The program allowed me to design my own curriculum, and for the second semester's internship I spent a few months living with homeschooling families in the Boston area and helping with correspondence and editorial work at *Growing Without Schooling*. This led to my decision to take a year off from college to work at Holt Associates, and I'm now working in the office entering and processing the catalog orders.

Since I began taking charge of my learning and my life, I have become a much happier and healthier person. Although it can be a bit frightening to accept the added responsibility that comes with taking more control of my life, I prefer doing what I find interesting and meaningful. I've seen that learning really can be fun and exciting and that I can follow my interests and passions and achieve my goals and dreams. I no longer feel dependent on schools or teachers. The whole world is out there waiting, and I am in control of how I explore it.

I used to wonder if I felt at all jealous of homeschoolers or resentful that I had not homeschooled during my childhood. I used to wish that I had, but now I accept my past and am grateful to be looking at the future with a new sense of direction and new eyes. ◆

Watching Children Learn

Helping Them Do It Themselves

Susan Sprehn of California writes:

The May sun was on my face and the spring flowers on the wind. Newborn Grace had been up a lot in the night and was finally asleep in my lap. I was just recovering from the birth. Right here, right now, the world was perfect.

Beautiful 4-year-old David was in the back yard trying to climb the Mulberry tree. Unfortunately, the lowest branch was too high. He needed a boost. "Mom," he said, a hint of whine in his voice. Oh, ugh. My moment of blissful repose was threatened. I was reluctant to get up, so I said, "Try pulling the climber over to the foot of the tree. Then you can get started on that." The climber was a structure just the right size to give him a boost into the tree. It was made by his Daddy out of plastic pipe, so it was light enough for him to drag, I thought. But no, he wasn't strong enough. Still, I found it easier to think than to get up, so I said, "Try pulling it from the low bar instead of the high one." David bent over and grasped the lowest bar, lifting the front of the climber off the ground, and moved it easily into position under the tree.

He learned in a very physical way about balance and pull and drag and center of gravity. He experienced the fact that although he couldn't pull the climber when its entire weight was dragging into the soil, he could if he lifted the leading legs up first. Most important, though, he learned that he could do things by himself with just a little help for me. That has been the foundation of our relationship as a homeschooling mother and child.

A couple of years later, we were driving some four or five hours to Gramma's house. Two-year-old Grace had a tape player and several stories to listen to. She reached the end of the tape and yelled at me to flip it. Now, I could have stopped the car and done it for her, but we'd already had lunch stops, running and stretching stops, and several potty stops. It's a stretch for her little hands, but it seems worth a try to say, "Grace, you can flip it by yourself."

"No, I can't."

"Just try. First, push a button and see what happens."

"Which one? I can't."

"Maybe you can. What does the red button do?"

And so the conversation went as Grace gained confidence and knowledge of her machine. I was tempted to be exasperated at how long flipping this tape was going to take when I realized that we were killing time in the car anyway. What was the hurry? As you can guess, Grace overcame her distrust of the machine and learned that it would do its tricks for her just as well as it would for me. Flipping a cassette was no longer a mysterious ceremony between grown-ups and the machine.

The scary thing in Grace's life now is learning to read. She is easily embarrassed by her mistakes and sometimes feels that we bigger people have some magic that allows us to make sense out of this secret code. The other day she asked, "What does this say?" and held up something that was within her reach phonetically. I told her that I was quite up to my elbows with dish soap and I couldn't come now. But she could call out the letters and I would "help with my voice." With encouragement, she managed to get a little way. I had to ask her to tell me if there was a space between the letters in there somewhere. Now she is in on one of our secrets! She knows how we can tell when one word ends and the next one begins. Since she discovered the secret of spaces between words, she has felt proud and empowered to decode more of our secrets on her own.

I used to chatter constantly in the car, mostly to while away the time for David when he was a toddler. The function of traffic lights was a much-discussed topic. One time, after explaining the meaning of the three colors and the arrows and the reason for having lights and not signs, I felt as

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if I had completely exhausted the subject, so I stopped talking. After three or four seconds, David said, "Well?" "Well what?" "Don't stop talking. Tell me more." I was all talked out, so I asked him to tell me about traffic lights.

He formulated his thoughts and showed me that he could take the information I had provided and turn it into something of his own. He could tell me what was interesting and important to him, and I was allowed a little time to just sit and listen. Days later he screeched from the car seat, "Mom! You can't go! The light is red now!" I had the perfect opportunity to explain the laws and the reasons behind the laws for right hand turns on a red light.

Eight years later, David wanted a new gear for his bicycle. Before he could buy the correct one, he needed to know what his gear ratios were. His father Greg and I were able to go about our tasks, answering David's occasional questions, while David noted the required numbers and worked them to the desired end. His needs at 10 were similar to his needs at 2. He needed us to be available to answer questions and he needed time to think.

These days I'm more likely to be asked for help with spelling a word or starting up a new computer program. The answer is about the same, though. I say, "Where is your dictionary?" or "Just click around and see what happens, and try to remember what each click does."

My hope is that in asking the children to do their own research and problem-solving, they will not only learn the specific information they are after but will also polish their problem-solving skills. That is, after all, a life skill worth having.

A Young Child's Learning

Annette Lessmann of Washington writes:

As a seven-month-old, Heather Rose taught herself how to put a lid on a container of bullion cubes. It took her 45 minutes (I timed it). She is persistent when she is interested. Most people can refocus their babies to another toy or another part of the room when they are into something they shouldn't be. It took more effort to refocus Heather Rose than other babies.

When she was 5, she begged to have homeschool begin. Though she wanted to begin homeschool that year, I didn't, because to me, homeschool meant that you sat down and had school. We began with a list of goals for the week, methods by which to obtain those goals, and a fair amount of unrealistic expectations on my part. It lasted a week. I called for reinforcements: "Oh, dear," I said to my husband, "would you please take over part of the school day with our daughter?" "No. Not if you are going to keep going on like that, I won't. Remember me? I ran a free school. I will not be a party to sit-down non-learning." OK. I punted. (Read that as "capitulated.")

For that first week I wrote down in Heather's log book what took place Monday through Friday. That weekend I realized she didn't stop learning just because the weekend was here. I began writing down what she did every

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day. More work for me, but after two years we have a good idea of how to accomplish the writing. We abandoned sit-down school. Instead, we walked on the beach, we read books, we played word games, we played math games, we played. We pointed out relationships between things, we noticed differences between things, we prepared meals, we sang. On two occasions we have had a return to sit-down school. Once Heather Rose wanted me to teach her how to add and subtract (this from a child who at age 3 told me that 2 + 3 = 5 and 3 + 2 = 5 and wasn't that cool? And at age 5 she asked me if I knew that 5 + 5 – 5 = 5. She also made up a game for the car in which we mentally add all the numbers on passing signs.) We got out beans and pennies and added and subtracted. Then we got out the flashcards and found she had already memorized facts up to sums of 6. The other time we had sit-down school was to introduce the lower case alphabet.

I'm a normal mom and worry that I'm not teaching her enough, but I realize she is doing just fine. No one tells her that what she is doing is too hard for a first grader. Right now she is interested in bugs, chemistry, tree climbing, bike riding, pretend, standing on her head, reading, cooking, and horses. It seems to me that she is doing fine in being an interested kid.

How Homeschooling Feels to a 12-Year-Old

Claire Mingins Stoschek of New York writes:

I am a 12-year-old homeschooler. Sometimes I think maybe I should go to public school so I can be prepared for college (yes, I have my mind set on going to college) and so I'll be used to being in a classroom with a teacher, etc. But my friends who go to the local school say all the work is so easy and that they get so bored there that they have nothing better to do than annoy (and get annoyed by) the boys, and joke and fool around. I also know that there's lots of peer pressure in most schools. My sister went to school when she was 13 and she got pushed into smoking, drugs, and alcohol by her

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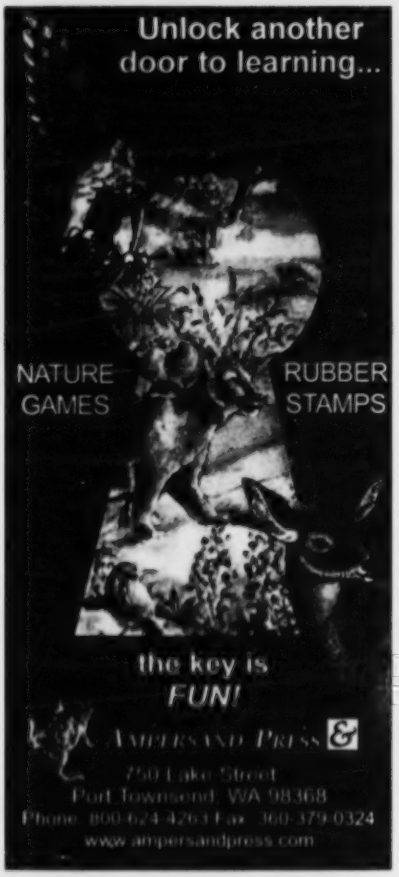

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supposed friends. She quit public school and went to boarding school for a year but then stopped for financial resaons and went back to homeschooling. She stopped smoking, drinking, and doing drugs.

I like homeschooling because I can learn at my own pace. I can also decide what and how I learn. I can set goals for myself and follow them up, or not. I have the choice, but I do achieve my goals because I want to learn. I especially love to learn in creative and fun ways.

I wanted to tell you about the things that I'm learning now.

Spelling: Almost every day I get my mom to sit down with me. She reads me words from a spelling book and I write them on a tablet. We do 25 words each time. Then we go over them together and she tells me which ones are wrong. Then I rewrite them and practice spelling them and she tests me again.

Science: I am now reading a book called *The Way Things Work* by David Macaulay. It really explains things so you can understand them. I read about eight pages of it a day. Each page tells about a different thing or device. I'm reading the section on energy, electricity, and magnets now.

Math: If I went to school I'd be in fifth grade (since that's what I'm signed up as) or sixth grade (since I'm 12) but I'm already starting the seventh grade math book. I've been learning about fractions, ratios, percents, and decimals lately. I've also been doing pre-algebra and geometry and I just learned the Pythagorean Theorem.

History/Social Studies: Almost every summer I go to the Renaissance Faire, an hour's drive from here. It has rides from the Renaissance, theater productions, games, food, and, best of all, people roaming around in costumes pretending they're from the Renaissance time. I love it there and it has gotten me very interested in learning about that time period, so a couple of weeks ago I decided I wanted to research and write about it. I got lots of books from the library and I read them and take notes. When I'm finished I'll give an oral report.

Reading: I'm always in the middle of a great book. My very favorite book in the whole world is *The Mists of Avalon* by Marion Zimmer Bradley. It is about King Arthur's times but from the woman's point of view.

Writing: I write every day, and I love to write. I write poems, stories, essays, reports, journal entries, and I put out my own magazine called "Morning Mists." But most importantly, I have over 40 pen-pals. I wrote a 164-page letter once. People always ask, "What did you write about?" and I respond, "Everything." I love having pen-pals; it's a great way to make new friends and learn about cultures all over the world (I have pen-pals in Australia, Ghana, Canada, England, Austria, Japan, and throughout the U.S.). The only problem is that pen-pals take up a lot of time and money, so I'm not getting any new ones.

Art: When I write my letters, I always decorate the letters and envelopes with stickers, drawings, designs, doodles, etc. I also love to draw, paint, doodle, make collages, work with clay and other art materials, and much more. Once I made a big clay goddess for my mom. It was about 2 1/2 feet tall and it took a long time, but it was fun.

Health: Lately I've been reading a book called *Laurel's Kitchen*. It has recipes for a healthy diet, directions on how to help prevent disease, facts on foods, vitamins, and minerals, and much more. It's very informative and I recommend it.

Sports: I love sports and am very active. My favorite sport is soccer. I play rec league in the fall, indoor soccer in the winter, travel league in the spring, and I go to soccer camps in the summer. I also love to ice skate, sled, ski, play volleyball, tetherball, miniature golf, baseball, croquet, take walks, jog, and go for bike rides.

Music: I'm not currently playing an instrument, but I used to play piano. I really want to play the guitar or the drums now. I sing all the time, even though I can't read or write music; I make up my own tunes and lyrics in my head.

Acting: Acting is one of my favorite things to do. I've been in over 14 plays, I've gone to many theater classes, and it is my dream to become an actress. Soon I will be starting a month-long theater camp. I'm excited

but a bit nervous.

Gardening/Chores: We have many flower and vegetable gardens, and I have my own flower garden and a section in our big vegetable garden that I take care of. I do many other chores, too, like mowing the lawn, helping to make jam, going strawberry picking, and helping to clean up, sweep the floors, etc.

A few more things I wanted to say about homeschooling in general: I know most people hate tests, but I actually like to take them. Sometimes I like to see how I stand in academics compared to other kids.

My mom used to help me with schoolwork. She would write stuff to do on our dry-erase board every day. But lately she hasn't been helping me at all. I've been really enthusiastic about learning lately, so every day I write up my own list of what I want to accomplish that day. Almost every day I get it all done, and I feel so good afterwards.

When summer comes, my peerpals ask me when I get out of school. I say, "I'm not going to stop learning all of a sudden just because it's summer." Learning is not a chore for me, just a challenge. Which is good, because I can go as far as I want.

I'm really glad that there's a magazine like GWS where homeschoolers can share their feelings and thoughts.

Helping Out with Audubon Society Bird Studies

Aaron Mecikalski of Arizona writes:

I'm 12 and have been homeschooling for three years. Every Wednesday and Saturday, I, my 9-year-old brother Jordan, my mom Danetta, and occasionally my dad Mark, go bird banding with Caleb Gordon, a graduate student, and a group of volunteers. We got in touch with this project through the Audubon Society newsletter and (through diligent work by my mother) we were able to begin volunteer work.

The idea of the project is to find the movement patterns of sparrows in winter. Within a week, I was setting up mist nets, corralling birds, and handling birds (taking them out of the nets and holding them up for photographers). Within several weeks, I was even banding birds. The trust Caleb and the other volunteers have given me is wonderful. I'm doing things Caleb doesn't let some people two, three, or even four times my age do. This has made me very proud and has proven to me that if you love something (like I do biology) and work hard at it without fooling around, you will gain people's trust and friendship, which will help you no matter what you do.

And from Matthew Pass of New Jersey:

I am 12, in what public school would call seventh grade. But for those of us who homeschool, we realize that grades are not so important. What is important is that I am learning all the time and finding out what interests me. One thing I am discovering is that I am surrounded by teachers. So many people, old and young, know things that are worth sharing. An example of this is our neighbors, Tim and Aileen Coffey, who live in our apartment building. Tim has written a book on American wildflowers, and they both serve on the Highland Park Shade Tree Commission.

Tim and Aileen recently invited me to go on an annual bird-watching field trip with them and with the Audubon Society. Every year the Audubon society goes bird-watching and bird-counting so they can have an idea how the birds are doing. Here are some of the highlights of the trip for me: at one point, after we had been walking on trails and counting many different kinds of birds, we came to a cliff and, looking down, I could see Ferrington Lake. Tim and I saw what looked liked a statue of a bird. It was a blue heron standing very still on a bank on the other side of the lake. Later we stopped at Rutgers Agricultural Farm and counted 500 seagulls and 400 Canadian geese. There were at least 400 different colored pigeons on the barn roof; the entire group of pigeons counted 1000 in all. It looked like a scene from the movie "The Birds."

At the end of the day I started to get exhausted, but I could still keep up with the others. At the last park we

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went to, the person from the Audubon Society had a monocular (as opposed to binoculars) that had a stand and looked like a Camcorder. He focused it on the Canadian geese swimming in the river, but he was really looking for a kingfisher. As we were driving away, Aileen said, "Look! It's a kingfisher!" I didn't see it, but it was very exciting anyway.

Interested in Politics

Beeb Ashcroft of Oregon writes:

My interest in politics started during last year's presidential election. I began seeing a lot of coverage of it on TV and soon became enthralled. I made my own campaign badge (I had written to the candidate, but he didn't send one, so I made my own). I tuned in when the first debate came on, even though my parents said it would be deadly dull. It turned out to be so entertaining that everyone pulled up a chair. I ended up watching all three debates.

On election day, I made a map of the U.S. with a color code for each candidate, and I sat and watched CNN all night, coloring in each state the color of the candidate who won it. Since the election, I've also read many political books and magazines and spent quite a few hours on the internet looking at political web sites.

Considering my interests in writing and drawing, I guess it's no surprise that I started drawing political cartoons and satires. Political cartooning is something I enjoy very much, and I hope to make a career out of it. Right now some of my cartoons and a satire are under consideration for publication in a political magazine. I hope if I can find more markets like that, I can get my work out there.

The ironic thing is that after all my interest in politics and after all those hours of CNN, I can't vote – not only because I'm 13, but because I'm English.

European Visits Bring History Studies to Life

Bryana Turner of Maine writes:

Towards the end of every school year, as I am concluding historical research on events such as the French Revolution, my mother and I plan a trip to Europe – a trip to witness the transformation of a two-dimensional photograph into three-dimensional reality. All of the words and pictures and the books themselves come alive when we visit Europe. It's as though a new understanding is born, a sudden realization that billions of people make up this world and each and every one of them is an individual in their own right. Nobody can think like another person; instead, they must recognize their own talents and abilities. More important, they must believe in themselves.

As a homeschooler, I have the opportunities and the time to explore other countries and different cultures. Every year I look forward with great anticipation to the months of March and April when I will be able to see for myself the wonders of history. In some sense I set a goal for myself during the rest of the year: that I must be able to understand what I see when we go to Europe, and I must be willing to appreciate it.

Homeschooling allows you to follow your goals, to reach out and touch the experience, to grasp at something that is beyond memorization. I believe that my trips to Europe are what motivate and bring to the surface a part of me that would otherwise be buried deep in the unknown and unfamiliar. ◆

Resources & Recommendations

New Newsletters

Ron Richardson announces a new publication, ***Readers Speak Out!***, which he describes as "a zine that depends not only on the very highest level of involvement by unschoolers but also provides to selected autodidacts an opportunity to run important aspects of the zine. *RSO!* is comprised of responses (50-100 words) to questions pertaining, for example, to **controversial aspects of politics, education, and the arts.** *RSO!* partners (an adult plus one or more self-schoolers) cook up the questions, and then we work closely with each potential or actual contributor to the zine. Growing authors is part of what we do. Write to the *RSO!* facilitator and I will send you three questions for your consideration and possible response: Ron Richardson, 4003 50th Av SW, Seattle WA 98116.

Twelve-year-old homeschooler Cecilia Schmitt wants readers to know about her monthly magazine, ***Creature Feature.*** Cecilia has published five issues of this 10-17 page magazine which she says contains "stories, poems, book reviews, movie reviews, articles, animal advice, columns, quizzes – in short, **anything fun and informative about animals**." Send a SASE for info or $1 for a sample issue to Creature Feature, 7200 Highland St, Springfield VA 22150.

Sixteen-year-old Amy Saunders' **history magazine** premiered in July, 1997. It's called ***Drawbridge*** and focuses on a particular aspect of history (the premiere issue focuses on the Lowell (Massachusetts) mills, and has essays, stories, poems, and a suggested read-ing list. Amy is looking for more writers and readers. For a sample copy, send $2 to Amy Saunders, 28 Oak Dr, Upton MA 01568 (email drawbridge@rocketmail.com).

Richard Harvey of England sent us a note announcing his new newsletter for fathers which focus on parenting, particularly **fathering, issues**. Interested fathers can contact Richard Harvey, 35 The Marles, Exmouth, Devon, EX8 4NE, England.

Megan Keller Wysocki of Homespun Solutions sent us several copies of her **"logic.newsletters."** These are newsletters for parents of children ages 3-8 and they're full of suggested **activities you can do to encourage children's analytical thinking**. The premier issue, which Megan is offering at no charge, contains several ideas for hands-on math activities and puzzles and a list of children's storybooks that deal with mathematical concepts. To receive a copy of this newsletter, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to Megan Keller Wysocki, Homespun Solutions, PO Box 1098, McMurray PA 15317. Those with access to Megan's web site can download the premiere issue from http://members.aol.com/mwhomespun/.

Book Portrays Lives of Children Around the World

Our staff gave enthusiastic reviews to a Dorling Kindersley/UNICEF book called *Children Just Like Me*, by Barnabas and Anabel Kindersley. Subtitled "A unique celebration of children around the world," this is a big and beautifully designed book that profiles the lives of children in 30 countries. Each page features a huge and very realistic photo of the child, a brief description of his or her life and some thoughts in the child's own words, and photos and information about just the sorts of things other young readers are curious about: what the child likes to eat, what she plays with, what his house looks like. This is an extremely captivating book; it's easy to imagine all members of a family poring over it together for hours. Check your local bookstore or library, or order from the publisher: $18.95 + $3.50 s/h; call 1-888-342-5357. ◆

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Additions to Directory

Here are the additions and changes that have come in since our last issue. Our complete 1997 Directory was published in GWS #114. Our Directory is not a list of all subscribers, but only of those *who ask to be listed*, so that other GWS readers, or other interested people, may get in touch with them. If you would like to be included, please send the entry form or a 3x5 card (one family per card). Please take care to include all the information - last name, full address, and so on. Tell us if you would rather have your phone number and town listed instead of your mailing address (we don't have space to list both).

If a Directory listing is followed by a **(H)**, the family is willing to host GWS travelers who make advance arrangements in writing.

If a name in a GWS story is followed by a state abbreviation in parentheses (e.g. "Jane Goldstein (MA) writes...") that person is in the Directory. If the name is followed by the entire state name (e.g. "Jane Goldstein of Massachusetts writes...") then that person is not in the Directory. We are happy to forward mail to those whose addresses are *not* in the Directory. If you want us to forward the letter without reading it, mark the *outside* of the envelope with writer's name/description and the issue number. If you want us to read the letter and then forward it, please enclose another stamped envelope.

When you send us an address change for a subscription, please remind us if you are in the Directory, so we can change it here, too.

Please remember that we can't control how the Directory is used; if you receive unwanted mail as a result of being listed, just toss it out or recycle it.

AZ — April ELLIOTT-EDELMAN (Morgan/88) 3049 E Clarendon Av, Phoenix 85016

CA, South (zips to 94000) — Eric & Shannon SCHERMERHORN (Hanna/92, Mattias/94, Bekah/97) 10353 Trabuco St, Bellflower 90706 **(H)** ••• Leslie & Michael SHORES (Nicholas/88, Matthew/91) 3889 Farquher Av, Los Alamitas 90720-3970 ••• Tom & Marianne STOCKTON (Matt/86, Bryan/90) 13031 Via del Toro, Poway 92064

CT — Michael & Diana HURWITZ (Daniel/84) PO Box 1275, Washington 06793 (change) ••• Laurie DOIG & Birgir NILSEN (Ingmar/91, Liam/93) 6 Howes St, Stamford 06906 **(H)**

FL — Karen & Ralph BOVE (Chris/82, Ben/87, Sam/89, Katie/93, Jack/96) 423 Soft Shadow Ln, DeBary 32713

GA — Linda & Matthew BLAISDELL (Justin & Nathan/88) 261 Fielding Ln, Rosewell 30076 (change) ••• Sharon BAGATELL (Diego/81, David/85) 820 Palatine Av, Atlanta 30316 **(H)**

IL — Kathy LARSON & Shinobu SATO (Ian/87, Colin/90, Maya/95) 8115 Kolmar Av, Skokie 60076 **(H)** ••• Beki SCIACCA (Tracy/80) 244 Elmwood Dr, Naperville 60540 **(H)** ••• Cathryn & Paul BAKER (Hannah/90, Rachel/92) 1424 E Hyde Park Blvd #3, Chicago 60615-3010

IA — Ed & Cheryl LACHOWSKI (Benjamin/92) 1504 Laurel Dr, Decorah 52101 (change) **(H)**

KY — Pat & Greg WILLIAMS (Cam/79, Evan/82) 750 Black Lick Rd, Gravel Switch 40328 (change)

LA — Lorraine & Steve REDMOND (Jim/90, Abby/93) 310 Unadilla St, Shreveport 71106

ME — Laura & John GARSON (Molly/90, Heath/93) 105 Foreside Rd, Falmouth 04105-1731 **(H)** ••• Victoria LIMBERGER (Cory/90, Colin/91, Aaron/95) RR 1 Box 2540, Vassalboro 04989

MD — Sherri COOK (Nikki/86, Heather/88) 156 Willowdale Dr #33, Frederick 21702 (change) **(H)**

MA — Mary Ellen MOORE & Josef KISH (Peter/88, Jenna/91) Methuen Area Homeschool Network, 56 Baremeadow St, Methuen 01844 ••• Chris DAVIS, 24 Draper Av, Arlington 02174

MO — Maggie GAGNON (Sunny/81) Rt 3 Box 3550, Camdenton 65020 **(H)** ••• Terry & Jane SMITH (Seth/70, Lindsey/71, Sarah/76) 1712 Cliff Dr, Columbia 65201 (change) **(H)**

NH — Pam & Dave RYAN (Jesse/86) 43 E Union St, Goffstown 03045

NY — Jeff MEAR & Laurie EVANS (Stephanie/86, Julian/90) 914-232-4606, (Katonah) 10536 ••• Robert & Ya Hui MATTERS (Phurbu Dorje/94) 2435 Haring St 4B, Brooklyn 11235 ••• Rob & Margie ROLLESTON (Jennifer/90, Carolyn/92) 44 Scarborough Pk, Rochester 14625 **(H)**

OH — Ernie & Elisabeth JACOBS (Christopher/83, Michael/88, Katrina/90) 13979 Sperry Rd, Newbury 44065 ••• Christine IGNASIAK & Dennis SADOWSKI (Carl/92, David/96) 1350 W 102 St, Cleveland 44102 **(H)** ••• Althea HAAS (Curtis/88) 825 Columbus Av NW, Canton 44708 **(H)** ••• Cindy & Jim DAY (Veronica/85, Christopher/88, Anthony/92) 2115 Harcourt Dr, Cincinnati 45244-2675

PA — Elizabeth & David TANG (Sara/87, Anna/89) 628 Sweetbriar Dr, Harrisburg 17111 **(H)** ••• Cynthia & Dean GOLDNER (Marc/83, Eric/85) 125 Pine Glen Rd, Langhorne 19047

RI — Paul & Laura MORSE (Jennifer/86, Bethany/88, Melissa/90, Benjamin/91) PO Box 951, Glendale 02826 (change)

TX — Lisa & Jason BOWDEN (Shane/90, Lauren/94) 2979 Grimes Crossing Rd, Copparas Cove 76522 **(H)**

VA — Allison & Bob MESNARD (Natalie/85, Lenora/87) 7736 Whittington Dr, Richmond 23225-2139 (change)

WA — Marcia & Don MILLER (Benjamin/93) PO Box 1256, Monroe 98272 ••• Kim & Larry TUCKER (Zachary/90, Nyka/92, July/93) 1111 Dike Rd, Mt Vernon 98273

WV — Kent & Tonya DAVIS (Katharine/94) 206 Murray St, Beckley 25801

Canada —

PQ — Vanessa WATERS (Amelia/91) 4216 Saint-Urbain, Montreal H2W 1V5 (change) **(H)**

Other Locations — Eve & John LUICK (Jack/84) Box 16, Seaview Park 5049, S. Australia, Australia (change) ••• Martine & Christopher ARCHER (Lewis/88, Thymian & Jacob/90, Mirinda/94) 3 Brookfield, Hampsthwaite, Harrogate, N Yorkshire, Great Britain HG3 2EF (change) ••• Judith & Jim STARR-LASSEN (Christian/85, Martina/92, Suzanne Marie/95) Birkelandsbotn 76, 5050 Nesttun Norway **(H)**

Groups to add to the Directory of Organizations that was published in GWS #114:

IL: Spectrum Homeschoolers, c/o Karolyn Kuehner, 10859 S. Longwood Dr, Chicago 60643-3312; 773-779-7608

NY: Western NY Homeschoolers, Gloria Zemer, 18 Maple Av, Portville 14770; 716-933-8669

TX: Houston Unschoolers Group, Holly Furgason, 9625 Exeter Rd, Houston 77093; 713-695-4888; furgason@swbell.net

Address Changes:

CA: Homeschool Assoc of CA, new toll-free phone number: 888-HSC-4440; www.hsc.org ••• Sonoma County Homeschoolers Assoc, PO Box 431, Petaluma 94953; 707-874-2740

MA: Franklin Cty Homelearning Families, Jean Johnson, 72 Prospect St, Greenfield 01301; 413-773-9280

VA: Learning in a Family Environment (LIFE), 40672 Tankerville Rd, Lovettsville 20180; email EBarkan@aol.com ••• Richmond Educ'l Alternatives for Children at Home (REACH), Box 36174, Richmond 23235-8003; 804-795-7624; carmel@compuserve.com; www.geocities.com/Heartland/Plains/7440/

Pen-Pals

Children wanting pen-pals should write to those listed. Please try to write to someone on the list before listing yourself, and remember to put your address on your letter. To be listed, send name, age, address, and 1-3 words on interests. ••• KAWECKI, RD 2 Box 43, Alburg VT 05440; Amanda (15) horses, karate, gardening; Natalie (9) writing, reading, showing calves ••• Melissa COHEN (16) 6713 Warren Rd, Ann Arbor MI 48105; reading, cooking, travel ••• Brahami MAMO (12) PO Box 292312, Columbus OH 43229; cooking, travel, piano ••• Tamara ROSS (13) RR 3, Moberly ON K0H 2B0, Canada; hard rock, Kurt Cobain, friends ••• Daniel MADSEN (10) 5518F Ojibway Lake Rd, Ely MN 55731; gymnastics, Magic the Gathering, drawing ••• Maggie BIRRELL (8) 205 Windsor Bush Rd, Cummington MA 01026; outdoors, theater, vegetarianism ••• Adam KROL (6) 41 Vine St, Burlington VT 05401; hockey, biking, baseball ••• Kyle BOLES (6) RR Box 337, Sharon VT 05065; legos, outdoors, horseback riding ••• Kim BRUNET (14) 1351 Lilac Ln, Carol Stream IL 60188; gymnastics, sports, reading ••• Shannon DAVIS (13) PO Box 794, Jasper AL 35502; comics, weaving, reading ••• LOVAS, 747 Frank Dr, Emmaus PA 18049; Anika (7) dancing, horseback riding, reading; Ildy (8) drawing, nature, horseback riding ••• HOFFMAN PATALONA, 42 Gabriel Rd, Cochecton NY 12726; Andrew (7) dinosaurs, sculpting, moviemaking; Beth (5) animals, drawing, gardening ••• DAY, 2115 Harcourt Dr, Cincinnati OH 45244; Veronica (12) Renaissance, dance, rabbits; Christopher (8) sports, money, cars; Anthony (5) history, swimming, inventions ••• Siobhan SOLBERG (14) 143 E 8 St, Brooklyn NY 11218; music, animals, sports

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ENTRY FORM FOR DIRECTORY

Use this form to send us a new entry or a substantial address change to be run in the next available issue of GWS.

Adults (first *and* last names):

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We are a homeschool family with a 6-yr-old boy. We have a homestead and fruit and nut tree orchard on the Matlole River in rural N. Calif. We would like to have a community of families living here, sharing gardens, homesteading, etc. We have a 2 bdrm cottage that is available for renting. 707-986-7787. Gil & Robie.

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